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THE IDEALS OF PAINTING



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THE IDEALS OF PAINTING

BY

J. COMYNS CARR

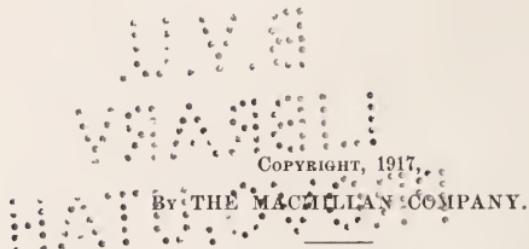
AUTHOR OF "COASTING BOHEMIA," "PAPERS ON ART"
"SOME EMINENT VICTORIANS," "KING ARTHUR," ETC.



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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS volume lays no claim to original research, nor does it affect to furnish an exhaustive record of the life and work even of the more eminent masters of modern Europe. Its purpose is rather to assist those students who desire to obtain a general view of the movement of Painting from the time of Giotto to the present day ; and to compare and contrast the spiritual ideals that have been pursued and perfected in the work of separate schools labouring under the dominating impulse supplied by individual genius.

With this special object in view no attempt has been made to examine or to discuss the purely technical problems of the painter's craft, except in so far as distinctive qualities of executive style may be regarded as the direct outcome of the imaginative conception the artist has sought to embody in his work.

The author's indebtedness to writers of recognised authority in the field of art history and criticism is too obvious to need detailed acknowledgement. It may, however, be well to note that in one or two instances, more particularly in treating of the English school, he has occasionally drawn upon separate studies of particular masters that have already been published under his name.

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THE IDEALS OF ITALY

INTRODUCTION

I

THE story of modern painting has its beginnings in Italy. The land wherein there lay entombed the vanished civilisation of Rome, and of Greece itself, in so far as the larger spirit that inspired Greek art and literature had been appropriated by Rome, was destined, as by right, to witness the coming of the new dawn, and it was there, out of the grave of the past, that there sprung up like a flower the spirit that was destined to refashion the art of our modern world.

And yet it is not in Rome, or even in Italy, that we must seek for the first stirrings of new life. It lies beyond the scope of my present task to take account of those wider influences that gradually transformed the life of the Middle Ages, and even in the more limited arena in which the imagination finds exercise it is here only possible to make the briefest reference to such sources of inspiration as lay outside the realm of painting itself. Yet in treating of the great intellectual and spiritual movement that goes by the name of the Renaissance, it is impossible to ignore what had already been accomplished in the epoch it succeeded; for, as we trace the stream of progress to its source, we are carried beyond the borders of Italy into those Northern lands where the Celtic spirit found its home.

Here we are brought into touch with the manifold signs of an earlier Renaissance that had been originated, and in some sense completed, before the movement, properly so called, had come into being. "There is a budding morrow in midnight," and within the confines of the Dark Ages themselves, the nascent spirit of the modern world had been fed from springs of thought and emotion that were almost wholly

independent of classic precept and example. The first form of its utterance was indeed not directly associated with the plastic arts, but the romantic influences which literature set free penetrated into every channel in which imagination is an active force, and through the medium of poetic expression became finally a powerful factor in shaping every form of art.

For in the North, no less than in Italy, it is in the domain of literature that we must look for the first achievements of creative genius. Upwards of a hundred years before the advent of Dante, Chrétien de Troyes had given, in France, coherent form to those imperishable legends which are enshrined in the great cycle of Arthurian story. With astounding rapidity, the romantic message they conveyed spread over Northern Europe, and penetrated to the shores of the Mediterranean. From the earliest years of the twelfth century, the names of the heroes of King Arthur's court were bestowed, at their baptism, upon the children of Italy; and the adventures these legends recorded were re-sung in Germany before the century had reached its close by Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gottfried of Strasbourg. But the original home of these legends was Britain itself, whose singers had made their beauty known long before they had been embodied in settled literary forms. In the closing quarter of the thirteenth century, their importance and significance was widely recognised. Dante, as well as Petrarch, had abundantly testified to the spell they exercised over the minds of men occupying the highest places in literature. Nor was their charm confined to a special class, or to a particular country; for we find, during the same period, that some of their principal features had already captured the popular imagination both of Sicily and of Spain.

It must not be forgotten, however, that in the form granted to them by Chrétien de Troyes and his followers, these legends had already been profoundly modified by influences that were at work throughout the whole of Northern Europe. The Roman conquest of France and of Britain had brought Christianity in its train, and, as early as the fifth century, the new faith had been accepted in the extended Roman

Empire. In their original shape, these Arthurian stories were purely Pagan in spirit, but when they reappear in the dress accorded to them by the romance writers of the twelfth century, we find they have already been so completely appropriated by the exponents of Christianity, and their original characteristics so entirely transformed, that they can no longer be considered apart from ideas which had their origin in the teaching of the church.

At first the fusion of these two elements was in part only external, but, little by little, the Christian element sank deeper into the heart of the legends upon which it was grafted, until out of this union there finally sprang the interpretation of that spirit of chivalry which now forms an indissoluble part of the message they have transmitted to a later civilisation. It is, indeed, in this chivalrous quality, which attached itself naturally to the romantic and adventurous character of the legends themselves, that we have to recognise the ultimate influence of Celtic culture within the arena of the plastic arts.

But there was a channel more immediate and direct through which the sculpture and painting of Italy confessed their indebtedness to the teaching of the Middle Ages, as it had found expression in the North. The triumphs of Gothic architecture may be reckoned the greatest independent contribution to art during the epoch to which they belonged; and the message this architecture embodied had a profound and far-reaching influence upon the development in Italy of both Painting and Sculpture. Not that the organic features which give to Gothic architecture its supreme claim to recognition were ever truly appropriated by the builders south of the Alps; even in France itself we may note the stubborn persistence of classic tradition, and in the great Romanesque churches of the south of France the encroachment of the newer spirit hardly penetrated to the deeper problems of constructive design. But the awakened sense for natural beauty, which was an integral part of Gothic invention, made itself clearly evident in the treatment of detail. Its presence, in these Romanesque buildings, may be likened to that of the

living vine that overgrows the unchanging features of the stone to which it clings, until, in its luxuriant growth, it would seem almost to transform what in truth it does no more than cover and conceal.

In northern France, however, this new spirit brought about a revolution that was fundamental. The real triumph of Gothic art, a triumph resting upon a conquest of beauty that was the direct outcome of the solution of mechanical problems of construction, is here clearly asserted, and it is this triumph which gives to the Gothic buildings of Northern France their claim to rank as a separate and independent achievement. Indeed, the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages may be cited as the single expression of the builders' art which the judgment of time has accorded the right to rank beside the temples of ancient Greece; and the qualities they display are so divergent, and so distinct, that they stand side by side, with no suggestion of rivalry or competition, as the two unapproachable achievements in architecture registered by the genius of Europe.

In the organic elements of constructive beauty the spirit that inspired the Gothic builders of the North struck no deep root in Italy. The classic tradition was there too strong to be subdued or overcome, but the quickened feeling for the beauty of natural form, both animate and inanimate, exhibited by the carvers in stone who decorated the great buildings of France, proved a fruitful source of inspiration to the sculptors of Italy who, in their turn, exercised a lasting influence upon Italian painting. What Italian art owed to these newer influences is clearly illustrated in the career of Nicolà Pisano (1206–1278), whose endeavour to revive the beauty of the antique world might have remained an isolated and almost barren achievement if the example he left to his followers had not been enriched by the closer study of nature which they derived from the teaching of the French carvers of the Middle Ages.

The more direct influence of the Christian religion upon all forms of imaginative art offers too wide a subject to be fully explored in such an essay as this. The transformation

it effected in partly reshaping Celtic legend has already been noted, but the authority of the church in the earlier development of the art of painting was so overwhelming and complete that, if religion itself had not been touched by the new spirit of humanity that became an active force from the opening years of the thirteenth century, it might have proved a fatal obstacle to the freer expansion of artistic genius.

In this connection the revolution accomplished by the career of St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) became a potent factor in liberating and enlarging the spiritual outlook of painting at a time when the church claimed the exclusive services of art. At the date of his conversion, the life of the cloister reflected, only too faithfully, the corruption of the world without. “Public worship,” to quote the words of the modern biographer of the saint, “reduced to liturgical ceremonies, no longer preserved anything that appealed to the intelligence. It was more and more becoming a sort of self-acting formula.” In creed and ritual it served almost entirely to obscure the simpler message as it was delivered by the divine founder of Christianity, and it was therefore no wonder that St. Francis, who steadfastly refused during the whole of his career to occupy himself with questions of doctrine, should have appealed to his age with a message that seemed new and revolutionary.

And the transformation in the spiritual outlook of his time which his teaching effected had the greater force in that it came, not from the monkish cell, but from the lips of one who had borne his part in that mundane life he sought to reform. St. Francis, who, in his earlier days, had felt to the full the temptations and allurements of the world he afterwards abjured, spoke to his generation with a quickened sympathy that the clergy, enmeshed in barren controversies, failed to command. It was this element of sympathy that lay at the root of the conquest he achieved. He understood the world, for he had been of it, and his passionate love of the beauties of outward nature was only another expression of that far-reaching sympathy that enabled him to command the

allegiance of those whom he sought to win to a nobler standard of life.

It is related of Gioacchino di Fiore, who may be accounted his spiritual precursor, that one day he was preaching in a chapel that was plunged in darkness owing to thick clouds that overcast the sky. Suddenly the clouds lifted, the sun shone, and the church was flooded with light. Gioacchino paused, saluted the sun, intoned the *Veni Creator*, and led his congregation out to look upon the landscape. This incident may be taken as directly emblematic of the drift of St. Francis' own teaching. He opened the windows of the monkish cell and taught its occupant to draw a new inspiration from nature.

It is no wonder then that the change he effected in the religious outlook of his time should quickly have communicated itself to art. To illustrate the life of the departed saint was among the first tasks that fell to the lot of Giotto; and it is easy to conceive with what passionate sympathy the great Florentine painter, in whose work is first announced a wider worship of nature, combined with a deeper vision into the secrets of human passion, would devote himself to illustrate the life of one who, in seeking to purify the spiritual life of his fellows, nevertheless found time to preach a sermon to the birds.

II

It has not been possible here to do more than hint at some of the larger influences that affected Western Europe in the opening years of the thirteenth century and to note the authority such influences exercised over the workers in every field where the imagination was a controlling force. That the chief exponents of this new spirit should have been gathered together in the fortunate city of Florence is one of those sublime accidents in the history of human affairs that is only to be accounted for by the presence of individual genius, whose advent in every epoch is apt to disturb and to upset all logical theories as to the expected course of human

events. That one of the greatest poets of the modern world should have found as his fellow citizen and contemporary a painter who added to his native gifts as a craftsman powers of imagination that entitled his work to rank with the highest achievements in literature itself, is a phenomenon that it is easier to acknowledge and accept than to explain by any logical process of scientific analysis.

For our present purpose, it is enough to note that the associated genius of Dante and Giotto served to concede to Florence its undisputed place as the cradle of the modern artistic spirit in literature and painting; and, when once the great qualities possessed by Giotto are truly measured and completely understood, there can be no room for wonder at the later supremacy of the school his genius had founded.

For the distinguishing mark of Florentine painting throughout the whole of its record lies in its profound attachment to the spiritual side of the life of man. To image the whole of this life, through the medium of those external facts of nature which can alone form the material of the plastic arts, was from the beginning the settled purpose and aim of every great Tuscan master, from Giotto to Michelangelo. And, in the endeavour to make manifest these inner truths, Florentine painting was led by a natural process to follow and reflect the story of man's life through which they are revealed and expressed. Passion and emotion, in their graver no less than in their lighter issues, are called into being by the varying pressure of fate and circumstance; and it is, therefore, no matter for wonder that the effort of Florentine painters to interpret the deeper workings of the soul should have resulted in a constant alliance with those legends wherein the changing fortunes of man are enshrined.

From its first beginnings to the hour of its decay, Florentine art had a story to tell; and it will be found, as we survey its brief and splendid history, that the external beauty of the world, which in other schools and at other epochs has seemed almost self-sufficing, was here no more than the fabric of a richly fashioned vocabulary by means of which the painter sought to enter into the world of the

spirit. This has sometimes been assumed to be the exclusive province of the poet, but so narrow a creed found no acceptance from the masters of the Florentine school. And even in imaginative literature, where this larger mission of spiritual interpretation has never been called in question, it will be found that the vision which probes most deeply the resident facts of character and passion is always most powerfully set in motion under the spell of some particular legend that demands illustration. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that all the most notable triumphs in imaginative literature, whether epic or dramatic, are no more than a natural development of man's childlike delight in the fascination of the story that calls them into exercise; and the spell of those original myths, which stand at the very dawn of the history of our race, is exerted again and again in every form of art, and outlasts as a source of inspiration the more varied experience offered by the complex circumstances of man's later history.

This deeply planted association between the plastic arts and the spiritual life of humanity, which is the dominant note of the painting of Florence, would seem to have been established in direct defiance of certain theories that later criticism has sought to impose. The truth that every art has its own laws that cannot be violated without disaster has induced the fallacy that there can be no intermingling of their separate missions. As a matter of fact, however, their constant indebtedness to one another is conclusively proved by a comparative study of them all. 'Art for art's sake' is a heresy of merely modern invention. In literature it has never ranked as anything higher than the sterile motto of men who have renounced the larger functions that belong to the historian of the human soul, while in painting and sculpture it will be found to be always most loudly proclaimed in those recurring seasons of decay when the pride of craftsmanship has supplanted the spontaneous processes of creation. Most assuredly it found no place in the gospel of Giotto and his followers, who fearlessly set out to prove that the plastic arts, no less than literature, could

rightly aspire to image the passionate life of man without fear of overstepping the limits imposed by the chosen material.

But although Florentine painting was from the first closely linked with the spirit that finds expression in imaginative literature, its achievements can only be truly estimated by reference to the laws that govern the vehicle through which they are won. For the worth of the ideas chosen for representation affords no measure of the value of the painting as a painting. The degree of beauty obtained can only be finally judged by the power shown in utilising the special resources of the vehicle to secure a result that can be reached by no other means than those imposed upon the artist by the medium in which he works. Every great painting must justify its existence apart from the message it seeks to convey; and that message is only valuable to its author in so far as it inspires new forms of beauty that lie clearly within the domain of the craft he professes. The work of the Florentine school can be safely tested by this standard. It makes no fictitious appeal that rests only upon the ideas it seeks to illustrate; for the assured victories of the most imaginative of its professors are victories that could have been won in no other art.

That art, when it accepts these larger responsibilities of illustration, is peculiarly subject to the maladies of the spirit it seeks to interpret, is proved again and again by the facts of its recorded history. It was made clearly manifest in Florence itself; for when the principles initiated by Giotto had found their final expression in the work of Michelangelo, it is not any longer in Tuscany, but rather in the schools of the North, inspired by the example of Venice, that we must look for whatever of surviving vitality painting was able to inherit and to bequeath. The admitted failure of this later hour, however, cannot be held to invalidate the victories that Florentine painting had already won. In all that concerns the processes of the imagination, the strength of the chain that is forged by genius resides not in its weakest, but in its strongest link; and by this test, the only test

truly applicable to imaginative work, whether literary or pictorial, the supremacy of the school of Florence remains unchallenged. Its admitted weakness in the hour of its decay counts for nothing when set against the splendour of its achievement in the season of its youth and maturity. This remains to the world as an imperishable possession that is as fresh and strong in its appeal to-day as in the century in which it was produced.

III

It is the unfailing mark of all higher forms of genius in such periods of prodigal invention that it moves in happy unconsciousness of the manifold perils it incurs and evades. The fetters that every form of art imposes upon its votaries are worn without constraint only by those inherently gifted for the adventure; and it is, perhaps, the most wonderful phenomenon in connection with the Florentine painters of the Quattro-Cento that their contribution to art ranks as highly in respect of the technical qualities they developed as in regard to those spiritual elements which provided the impulse under which they worked. It becomes, therefore, merely from the point of view of the painter's craft, a matter of the highest importance to discover what are the distinguishing elements in the vocabulary of the painter who attaches himself to the service of spiritual ideas.

The constituent elements of every picture, whatever its aim and purpose, are colour and design; and no painting can claim the right to existence that does not embody the allurements of both. But the dominating place held by the one or the other may be taken at all times as the sure index of the particular ideal animating the master whose work is the subject of study. It may be said of all plastic art, whatever its direction, that it finally rests upon the imitation of nature; but the representative character which thus belongs to it will be found to vary in kind and in degree according to the particular ideal which the artist has set before him. The representation of nature tends at its opposite poles

either towards illusion or towards symbolism. No particular manifestation of art can be rightly understood unless this distinction is kept steadily in view, and the divergent processes which are induced by these two competing influences will be found to assert themselves in alternating proportion in the work of every school and of every individual master. It will be found, at each successive epoch in the history of painting, that where the imagination is admitted as a controlling force, where, that is to say, the material at the service of the painter is used for the expression of ideas, the result of his labours manifests an ever increasing reliance upon the language of design, and leads to a deliberate limitation in the employment of those forces of illusion supplied by colour which give their special charm to an art differently inspired. Not that the painter who acknowledges the authority of design therefore abjures or ignores the fascinations of colour. The colouring of Botticelli is as notable and significant as the colouring of Giorgione or Titian; but the brilliant hues he summons from the world about him are called to his aid rather for the purpose of assisting the imaginative aim of his work than with the desire to reproduce the sensuous charm of nature. The riot of brilliant tints that the outward world casts in prodigal profusion at his feet, he sifts and sorts as the jeweller sorts his gems, and in the form in which they are reproduced upon his canvas, they are seen to be as closely imprisoned in the encompassing network of his design as are the precious stones which the goldsmith fastens within the golden fetters his invention has contrived.

It is not in this way that colour is employed by painters who admit it as the supreme factor in their work. There, too, the claims of design are recognised and admitted; but it is design that yields at every point to the imperious demands of the colourist who, in the pursuit of the overwhelming allurements of illusion, allows the myriad hues of nature, as they pass under the changing influences of light and shade, to over-run those stricter borders that the great draftsmen of design love to establish and to observe.

It was Venice that first gave to colour this preponderating

place in the art of the painter; and, by the light of the divergent aims which these two great schools separately assert, we may still test and measure the aim of all work in painting that has been achieved in more modern times. It happens, therefore, that the distinction between the schools of Florence and Venice corresponds to an essential divergence in the ideals and practice of their professors. All lesser classifications are in some sense accidental and sometimes merely geographical. The painters of Umbria and Siena, for example, were from the first governed by the same essential laws as those to which the Florentines owned allegiance; and it is only when we contrast the work of any or all of them with the contemporary achievements of Venetian painters that we realise elements of divergence that are the outcome of ideals radically opposed and contrasted. This will more clearly appear at a later stage when we come to consider the masterpieces of the Venetian school. For the present, it is sufficient to note the indisputable authority of design within the school of Florence, and the close association of Florentine painting with architecture and sculpture that was the inevitable result.

For in architecture and sculpture design counts for all in all, and it was therefore by no accident, but through natural acquiescence in inevitable law, that Florentine painting and Florentine sculpture were throughout their brief and splendid history constantly interdependent, and that their manifestations were again and again combined in the practice of individual masters. To satisfy the natural aspirations of the Florentine school, there was need of the associated efforts of every branch of art that relied upon the study of form: need also of the full support of literature itself which throughout the ages has fed the springs that supply the artist's inspiration. It is, therefore, not wonderful that Giotto should have been known to his generation by notable achievements in one and all of these separate fields of formal expression; for the rich store of spiritual beauty which he shared with his contemporaries in the world of literature clamoured for interpretation through the quickened language

of visual art, and the message he bore could only have found adequate utterance by invoking the assistance of every vehicle which the plastic arts placed at his disposal.

IV

Before treating in greater detail of Giotto and his successors, it may be well to remind ourselves of certain dangers which beset the criticism of art in all its many shapes and which, unless they are clearly apprehended, are likely to distort and mislead the judgment of the enquirer. Chief among these is what may be termed the historic danger, the danger, that is to say, of appraising the work of individual genius by a too constant reference to the epoch to which it belongs. The fallacy that underlies the application of such a test is relevant to all the arts irrespective of the medium in which they seek utterance; but it is specially applicable to painting, seeing that at certain stages in its earlier development the illusion of progress finds some justification in fact. Yet in essence the tendency to dwell upon the signs of historic development masks a fundamental error which is apt to be profoundly mischievous and misleading.

Although the story of art naturally unfolds itself in historic sequence, it would be a grave mistake to assume that we can take the measure of any particular achievement by reference to the place it chances to occupy in the onward march of time. The flight of the years and the ages does indeed correspond to an uninterrupted increase in the funded harvest of human knowledge, and, therefore, in the arena of science, the later date must always imply the larger conquest. But this law loses its force as we enter the world of art. The problems of the human spirit, with the varied passions and emotions that fate and circumstances force into utterance are in themselves constant and unchanging; and the individual stature of the poet or the painter, by means of which they are revealed and interpreted, affords the sole measure of any and every artistic victory no matter in what particular epoch of the world's history it chances to be won.

This conclusion might seem, at first sight, to assign to art an inferior place among the forces that affect the destinies of humanity, and the sense of disappointed rivalry with the unhalting onward movement of science has sometimes betrayed itself in the recorded utterances of artists themselves. It would, indeed, be strange if this were not so, more especially in our later day when art, with unalterable attitude, has had to watch the gathering forces of science, as it has passed onward in boundless conquests over the secrets of nature. But though, at such moments, it may seem to be outpaced, art, as time has shown, is never outdistanced. With the sudden advent of genius, beauty that is born of the unchanging spirit of man takes a new glory from the vision whereby it is freshly probed and newly revealed. For the message that art has to deliver is ever the same, and yet never the same. The emotions of mankind from which it is fed are constant in their recurrence, but each new voice that is rightly tuned to give them utterance finds fresh harmonies that echo, without repeating, the still unchallenged strains of the singers of an earlier day. The instruments through which they find expression are not of equal strength, for the summits scaled by genius vary in stature and in grandeur as the hilltops of a mountain range; but, although one peak rises above another, the supremacy that fate accords to this or that individual master has no ascertained relation to the place he chances to occupy in the moving panorama of the world's history.

A second danger which confronts the critic of art springs from an undue importance that is sometimes accorded to the accident of geographical position. It is inevitable that different schools of art should have been arranged according to the particular localities in which they sprang into being: it is no less inevitable that the close association imposed by this accident of locality should breed a certain community in the ideals pursued, and in the means sought for their expression. We need, however, to be constantly on our guard lest categories established, and in some sense justified, by local conditions should tempt us to ignore the final authority of

individual genius which ultimately affords the only true criterion of the deeper tendencies of purpose and style. This disconcerting intrusion of individual personality will be found as a constantly disturbing force, upsetting the laboured classification of schools that is based upon merely local considerations. We shall come to recognise within the school of Florence itself, perhaps the most coherent of all the schools, painters who by native gift and inclination might be more fitly grouped with members of other schools, whose work frankly confesses a different ideal. And, in like manner, there are painters belonging by their birth to Northern Italy, of whom Andrea Mantegna may be cited as a capital instance, who, in all that is essential in their genius, claim natural kinship with Florence.

FLORENCE, UMBRIA, AND SIENA

GIOTTO AND HIS SUCCESSORS

GIOTTO was not long in announcing the special direction his genius was destined to take. Forty years before his entry into the world St. Francis had died at the age of forty-four. The founder of the Franciscan order had brought to the service of the church a full knowledge of the world he afterwards abjured; and the picturesque circumstances of his conversion, no less than his noble teaching and example, effected a revolution in the spiritual outlook of the thirteenth century. That revolution was reflected in art through the genius of Giotto. He became through the language appropriate to painting the greatest of the biographers of the monk of Assisi, and his first great task was the illustration of the life of his hero in the series of frescoes that decorate the Upper church in that city. From that time to the end of his life Giotto sought scarce any other theme than the life of the saint and the life of our Lord, with which it was indissolubly connected; and yet his genius found within these limits material sufficient to enable him to explore the whole field of human passion and human experience. In the strict sense of the word his mission differed in nothing from that of the painters who had preceded him. His artistic life was wholly dedicated to the service of the church, but, as the example and teaching of St. Francis had served to enlarge and revitalise the outlook of contemporary Christianity, so, in like manner, the larger and more liberal spirit of humanity that lay at the root of Giotto's nature made him the rightful founder of a school of painting which his genius equipped with the resources needed for the interpretation of every form of spiritual life.

Giotto's career, therefore, raises at the outset the almost insoluble problem of the mutual obligations of art and reli-

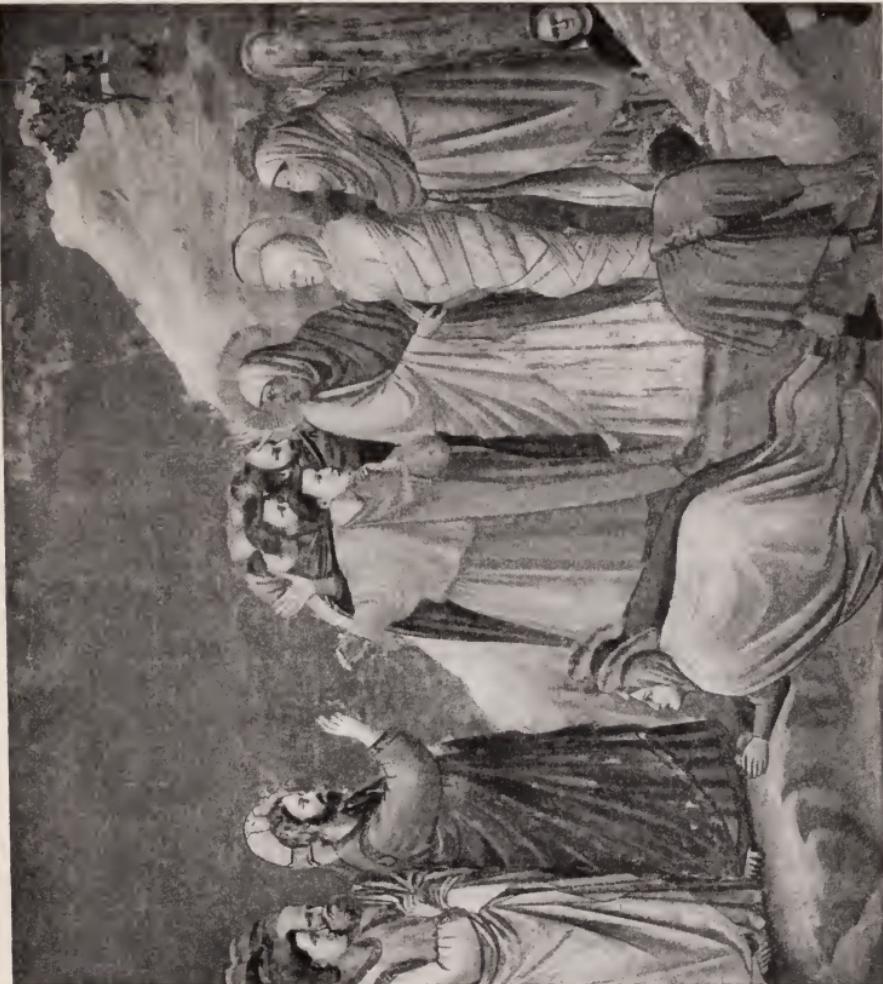
gion. If we interpret religion in its larger and deeper sense, the debt which art has to acknowledge is indeed measureless. The impulse of worship and the profound sense of sympathy which may be said to lie at the very root of Christianity are no less indispensable elements of every form of imaginative vision. They are therefore the necessary ingredients of all great art, no matter what the subject upon which it is employed and whatever the epoch in which it may appear.

But there is a narrower sense in which the debt of religion to art far transcends that of art to religion.

In many stages of the history of the Christian faith it has submitted itself to a bondage which art has never acknowledged. Convention has often tended to impose upon it the shackles of a crystallised creed which sometimes restricts and even deforms the principles of the faith it affects to embody; and art, in the hands of men whose genius is not strong enough to assert its freedom, can then do no more than reflect these limitations and deformities. It has constantly happened, however, that artists of larger endowment, although they have laboured in formal obedience to the church, have availed by the richer message of humanity they bring to their task to widen and deepen the faith they are employed to illustrate. This was in the fullest sense true of the life work of Giotto.

The newly awakened feeling for the tragic issues of life of which he was the eloquent exponent, and his wider sympathy with every phase of human emotion, enabled him to grant to the teaching of the church that had been too long imprisoned in an outworn ritual, the breath of new life and the flame of fresh illumination. The poet's soul was needed to save what was essential in Christianity from dwindling to the narrow limits of a lifeless creed, and the poet appeared in the person of Giotto.

His work at Assisi was the first expression of great powers that were still in some sense immature, and if we would take the full measure of his genius, we must turn to his illustration of the same twin themes as it is recorded in the frescoes of the Arena Chapel at Padua. Giotto was then just forty



The Arena Chapel, Padua.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS, BY Giotto

Allvari Photo.

years of age, and, as these paintings prove, in the fullness of his powers in regard both to imaginative invention and technical resource. Dante, his senior by no more than a year, visited him while he was at work in the chapel, and the story of their meeting is recorded by Venuto da Imola, the poet's earliest commentator. It is not, indeed, wonderful that these two men should have been comrades as well as contemporaries, for Giotto's imaginative vision in its comprehensive survey of the human spirit was destined to demonstrate that painting, without overstepping the limits its material assigns to it, could emulate language as an instrument for the expression of poetic ideas, even when that language was moulded by the earliest of the unchallenged masters of verse in our modern world. Like all great artists whose work is freighted with an ideal message, Giotto astounds the observer by the fullness and the candour of his realism. He shuns nothing that is human in man, while he still keeps firm hold of that finer essence that claims to be divine, and in this characteristic he takes rank with all the great creators either in literature or art.

The stature of every great artist is indeed to be measured not so much by the height to which he can soar as by the wealth of the purely human elements that he has strength to carry upwards in his flight. In Giotto's case that wealth may be said to be phenomenal. His survey of the manifold truths of man's nature, whether subtle or simple, was almost Shakespearian in its range, and it was that which enabled him to establish a tradition in painting which those who came after him, armed with the larger technical resources that lay ready to their hand, could do no more than develop on the lines fixed by his initiative. This may not perhaps immediately make itself clear to the student of Giotto's painting who, at the first encounter, may find his admiration hindered by the primitive form in which the artist is compelled to make his appeal. But the difficulty will vanish on closer and longer acquaintance. The little fringe of science which hedges round the domain of the painter or the sculptor, and which needs to be conquered before absolute full-

ness of expression is achieved, was in that earlier day not yet wholly mastered. Those who came after him quickly explored the problems of technical science he was unable wholly to solve, but in all that is essential to the equipment of genius there were none of his successors who could claim to be his rivals till we arrive at that great triumvirate, Raphael, Leonardo, and Michelangelo, who resume once more that wider empire that the immediate followers of Giotto were not fitted to inherit. And even the later enlargement of the means of expression properly flows from his teaching and example, for it was under the urgent pressure of the ideas chosen for illustration that those who followed him were able to invent new art forms or to perfect those already in existence.

Giotto's unswerving allegiance to the claims of the legend chosen for illustration was the sovereign quality that he stamped upon the painter's art, and such was the irresistible tyranny of genius that by his authority alone the future direction and the ultimate destiny of the Florentine school was decisively settled. For it is not to be assumed that the city his genius first made illustrious produced only painters with gifts kindred to his own. As we come to consider in somewhat closer detail the masters of the Quattro-Cento we shall find examples of men who by native endowment might more fitly have found a place in other schools: men who, although they could not escape from the tradition he had established, nevertheless reveal in their work innate tendencies towards the naturalism of the North that found its fullest expression in Venice. But the authority of his example proved even in their case inexorable, and the wonder is not that some of the painters of Florence should have exhibited a different impulse, but that the force of his inspiration should have availed to summon from among his fellow citizens so mighty a company of men who shared the ideals and inherited in varying measure those great powers he was the first to exhibit.

The most wonderful of the frescoes at Padua are concerned with the life of our Saviour, and we may choose almost at

hazard any one of the series in illustration of what has been said as to the general tendencies of his design. It is very noticeable here, as well as in his earlier work at Assisi, that in passing from the life of St. Francis to the life of Jesus, Giotto exhibits no change in the spiritual attitude he assumes towards the subject upon which he is engaged. The world inhabited by St. Francis, a world so nearly within his own personal experience, is interpreted in a manner that betrays the same reverence and intensity of vision as that which he brings to his rendering of the life of Christ. The same reverence and the same fearless simplicity of approach, for he shared with all the highest genius in every realm of art an almost childlike faith in the actuality of the scenes he sought to present.

As we pass in review this wondrous series of designs, we are struck by the constant presence of that breadth and urbanity of vision which remained to the end of his career as his abiding characteristic. There is at present in his practice as a painter no sign of any conscious dependence upon models supplied by classical example: that came to men of a later date when the developed study of nature, initiated by him, fitted the exponent of painting to profit by the example of classical sculpture without sacrifice of his own vitality. The earlier Renaissance of which Giotto was the exponent took its spring from the very heart of the Middle Ages. He was one of the first to hear the whisperings of that morrow that was budding in midnight: the first to herald a new dawn that as yet borrowed scarcely a ray of light from the vanished glories of the past. It was his urgent desire to find utterance for the passionate life of humanity that served as the first lever to raise the resources of art itself from the conventional forms into which it had fallen. For what is strikingly true of his art, and remains true of all art, is that there are no great conquests of craftsmanship which can be divorced from the ideas they are employed to express. Here, as always, it is impossible to detach true technical accomplishment from ideal intention: for there is no abstract language of painting which the professor



Alinart Photo.

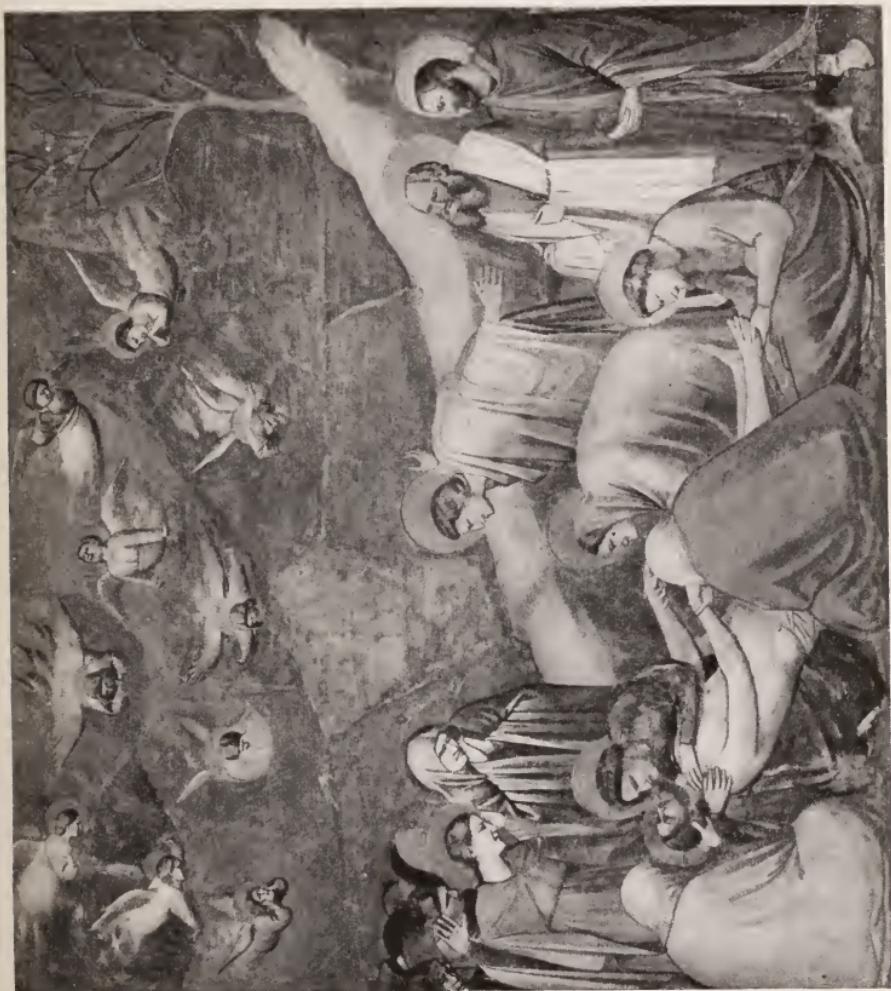
Arena Chapel, Padua.

PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN, BY Giotto

in any epoch finds ready to his hand. The impartial representation of physical reality, depending upon a cold inspection of the facts of nature, belongs not to art but to science, and in the triumphs of such a science the photograph far surpasses all that the hand of the individual master can possibly accomplish.

If we bear these considerations in mind, we shall be able the better to appreciate the importance of the development of painting as an art accomplished by Giotto, and we shall understand at its full value the splendour of his genius as it is exhibited at Padua. In any one of the long series of frescoes from his hand we shall be able to note the entire preoccupation of the painter with the essential features of the subject under treatment, and the noble qualities of style which this spiritual preoccupation evoked.

There is not anywhere to be discovered the smallest sign of what may be described as rhetoric in expression : all the energies of the painter are bent upon the illustration of the particular theme ; he has neither the will nor the opportunity for casual or insignificant decoration. This dominant quality of his art leaves it in essence more truly classical than anything produced by the sculptors Nicolò and Giovanni Pisano, whose alliance with the antique was external rather than spiritual. If we look only to the craftsmanship he displays, we shall find that he was led, by virtue of his entire concentration upon the requirements of the particular theme, to evolve those elements of simplicity and directness which are of the essence of the finest work of ancient sculpture. His figures have, in short, that noblest attribute of style which depends upon the elimination of insignificant realities in the pursuit of the dominant motive that governs the chosen action of the body. Turn, for instance, to the fresco which represents Joachim retiring to his sheepfold, and note the dignity and resignation of the principal figure : or look again at the exquisite beauty and fitness of the group of Joachim and Anna in their meeting at the Golden Gate ; and it will be found easy to realise how far, by his own unassisted genius, Giotto was able to anticipate those later triumphs



Arena Chapel, Padua.

Altarpiece Photo.

DEPOSITION, BY Giotto

which came when the teaching of the antique had been fully and consciously appropriated. The same great qualities are exhibited in equal perfection in the scene where the Virgin returns to her home, in the exquisite composition of the Nativity, and in the unforced tenderness exhibited in the beautiful composition representing the Adoration of the Magi, where also we may note in the gesture of the attendant who leads the camel how the eye of the artist is already alert to observe and to record those traits of human character that are not directly involved in the central emotions of the principal theme.

And now, if we would contrast these more tranquil themes with others of the series that demand an insight no less sure into the more dramatic crises of life, we may turn to the subject of the Raising of Lazarus, and to the still more striking composition of the Entombment. The last-named work is of particular interest in as much as it supplies the first great rendering of a theme that repeatedly occupied the genius of the painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And if we pass all these later examples in review, we shall have to acknowledge that with the possible exception of Andrea Mantegna, none of those who followed Giotto were able to rival in the essential grasp of its passionate realities, or even in the more purely artistic qualities that gave these realities form and utterance, the initial achievement of Giotto at Padua.

As an exhibition of the human drama it remains complete and unchallengeable, while the rich invention it employs bears the stamp of absolute appropriateness to the resources of painting and design. It is in fact the supreme invention of an artist moving securely within the limits of his medium, and it asserts once more with absolute authority the dominion of the imagination as a controlling force in the enlargement of the technical resources of art itself.

PAINTERS OF THE QUATTRO-CENTO

WHEN Giotto died, the wide empire his genius had conquered and explored became broken up into separate kingdoms. The comprehensive mastery which belonged to his art was not again resumed until a much later period, and in the hands of his immediate disciples the tradition he had established was only imperfectly maintained. The larger authority of the master was indeed in some degree a source of hindrance to his pupils, for while it tended to discourage initiative in lesser men who might have successfully pursued separate lines of development, there were none amongst them sufficiently gifted to embody in its entirety the wider message to which his genius had given form and expression.

In a brief survey like the present it is not therefore profitable to follow in any detail the labours of his immediate successors. The study of their varying efforts is chiefly interesting for the testimony it affords to the commanding individuality of the master whose precept and example they could only imperfectly appropriate. The paintings of Taddeo Gaddi, and even of Giottino, do indeed continue to repeat and to reproduce the merely formal qualities of Giotto's art, but the imagination which alone sufficed to give to these forms their vital force was not as yet destined to find in the school a worthy inheritor.

With the advent of Andrea Orcagna (1316–1368) there was for the first time restored to Florentine painting something of that richness of organic life with which Giotto had originally endowed it. At once painter, sculptor, and architect, he was fitted by training and equipment to take advantage of the principles the master had established: and though Giotto had never been personally known to him, he proved himself, within certain well-defined limits, capable of adopt-



National Gallery, London.

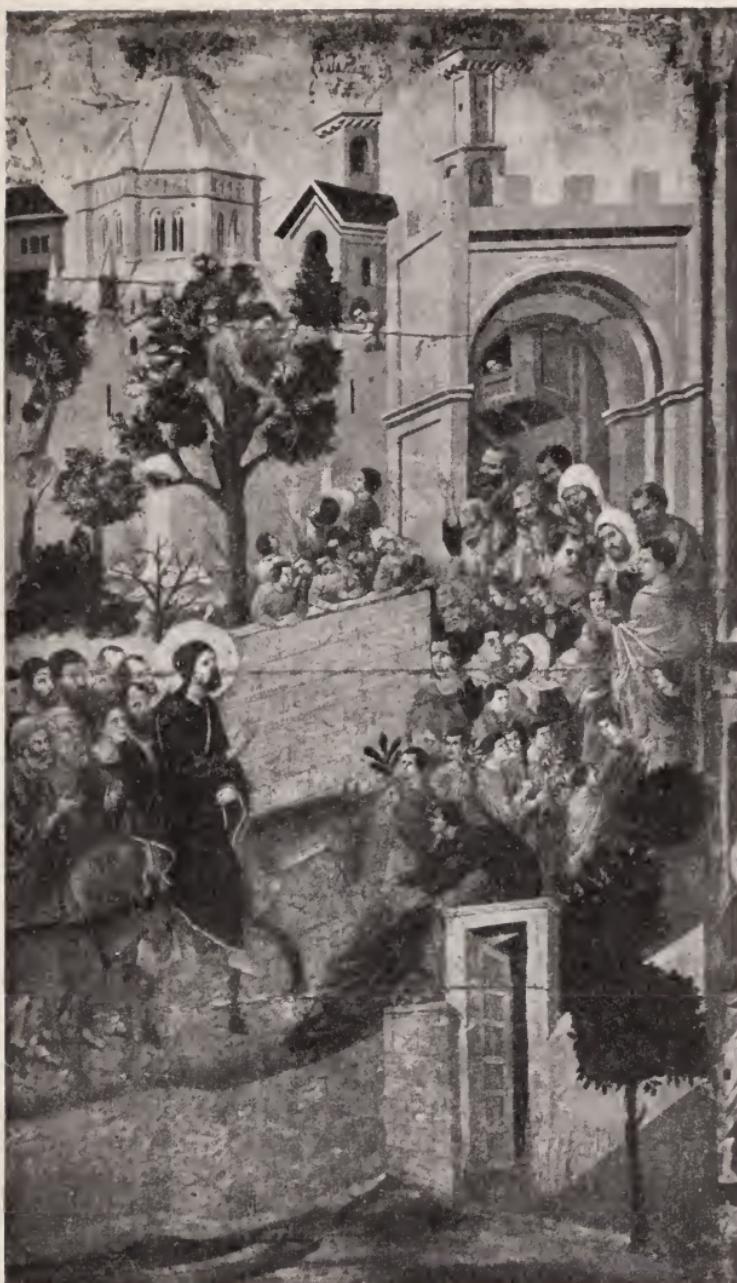
THE ROUT OF SAN ROMANO, BY PAOLO UCCELLO

ing and developing some of the essential features of his style. Casting aside much of that elaboration into which the immediate imitators of the great Florentine had fallen, he restored to painting a measure of that essential simplicity in conception which is the hallmark of all art that makes for greatness; and his surviving work suffices to prove that Orcagna can claim his rightful place, not only as the first worthy successor of Giotto, but in some sense also as the legitimate precursor of Masolino and Masaccio. Fra Angelico of Fiesole and Paolo Uccello, though both were born before the fourteenth century had expired, belong by right to that great group of Florentine painters of the Quattro-Cento whose varied achievement we have now to consider.

And with the Florentine school must be associated for our present purpose the schools of Siena and Umbria; for in respect of all essential qualities of invention and style there is nothing that divides them. The only separation of schools in Italy that corresponds to an essential distinction of aim and practice is, as I have already hinted, that which divides Florence and Venice. The dominating place of design in painting, and the consequent subordination of colour to the requirements of design, were as profoundly characteristic of Duccio, of Piero della Francesca, Melozzo da Forli, Signorelli, and Perugino as of their comrades in the Florentine school, strictly so called. But when we contrast any or all of them with the painters of Venice and of the neighbouring schools of the North that adopted the tradition of Venetian painting, the case is widely different. Here we are brought face to face with a radical contrast of ideals and consequent results in technical practice, which will be found to re-assert themselves with varying force in every successive epoch of modern painting. Of these separate ideals I shall have to speak at greater length in considering the masterpieces of the Venetian school; it is sufficient for the present to point out that in Umbria, in Siena, and in Florence we have to trace the combined efforts of a race of artists whose practice was governed

by their unswerving allegiance to the spiritual ideal they sought to present. Individual tendencies which no school, whatever the weight of its authority, has ever been able to suppress will have to be noted as we proceed. There were masters among the Florentines whose native gift disposed them to the study of the kind of realism that partly dominated the energies of the painters of Venice, but such individual influences were never so strongly asserted in the schools of the South as to disturb the tradition of technical style that was based upon the teaching of men whose genius was dedicated to the expression of imaginative ideas.

That amongst these schools of Central and Southern Italy Florence should have held from the first a place of indisputable supremacy is solely due to the fact that at every successive epoch in its career it was served by men of exceptional genius. Its fortunate superiority in this respect was clearly asserted at the dawn of the Renaissance. Duccio of Siena was Giotto's senior by only a few years, and in regard to the production of their greatest and most characteristic achievements Giotto claims the earlier date. And yet, in any comparison of the essential claims of their art there is no room for a halting judgment; for although Duccio was greatly gifted in pictorial invention and in the power of finding graceful decorative forms of expression, he was markedly deficient in that broader and richer spirit of humanity that belongs to his Florentine contemporary. Modern criticism has sought to indicate the wide gulf that divides them in terms that bear too strict a reference to the purely technical qualities of their art; for although it may be true, as Mr. Berenson expresses it, that Giotto's painting reveals a stronger sense of "tactile values," this is but a superficial index of differences that flow from a deeper source, and are of far larger significance. Giotto's superior grasp of the secrets of human character and human emotion stamps even the most beautiful of Duccio's inventions as being by comparison fanciful rather than truly imaginative, and if his decorative power leaves him master for the time



Anderson Photo.

Duomo-Siena.

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM, BY DUCCIO

of a graceful completeness the Florentine did not always command, this is due to the fact that the technical resources of painting were as yet unable to satisfy completely the demands of Giotto's more penetrating vision into those passionate realities for which he was seeking to find a fitting pictorial image.

And what is true of the dawn of Florentine painting remains true of every later stage in its progressive development, and in all the separate directions in which its possibilities were explored and perfected. At each critical moment in the history of the school, and for every technical problem as it arose and called for solution, Florence, as though by a miracle, was able to supply the man of genius, fitly equipped for the adventure that had to be undertaken. The allied schools of Umbria and Siena had to wait upon her initiative, and it is this fact which serves to make the story of Florentine painting during the fifteenth century so extraordinarily interesting to every student of art.

The main currents of development that may be distinguished in the work of individual masters of the school may be roughly grouped under the following headings:—

(1) *Devotional Painters*: in a sense all painters of the fifteenth century come under this denomination, for there was not one whose art was not employed in the service of the church. But the term may be specially applied to a group of men who, while they freely availed themselves of the increased resources that came to the art of their time, continued willingly to surrender themselves to an ideal that sought no other source of inspiration than that provided by the Christian legend. At the head of this group stands Fra Angelico of Fiesole, and amongst the more distinguished of his successors are Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi, and Fra Bartolommeo.

(2) *The Experimentalists*: men who, in addition to the spiritual ideal that inspired their work, addressed themselves more particularly to the investigation of problems, partly scientific in their nature, that awaited and demanded solution before painting could acquire complete freedom of ex-

pression. In this group may be counted Paolo Uccello, Masaccio, Pollajuolo, Signorelli, and Verrocchio.

(3) *The Naturalists*: consisting of painters who, whatever the theme upon which they are engaged, tend by their innate gifts to develop the side of the art that rests upon individual portraiture, and those more intimate social relations that form the foundation of the art of Genre. In this group are to be found Fra Lippo Lippi, Ghirlandajo, Piero della Francesca, Melozzo da Forli, Benozzo Gozzoli, and Cosimo Rosselli.

(4) *The Idealists*: men in whose work the imagination proved a constant and controlling factor, and who in virtue of superior genius were enabled to carry forward the larger tradition established by Giotto. This group, whose representatives stand in the highway of Florentine painting, of necessity includes individual names already associated with separate and particular developments of the art of painting. At the head of the list stands Andrea Orcagna, and among his successors are Fra Lippo Lippi, Masaccio, Botticelli, Signorelli, Verrocchio, Piero della Francesca, and Filippino Lippi.

In suggesting this distribution of Florentine and Umbrian painters into separate groups it is necessary to beware here, as in all matters of art, of the ever present danger of categories. Art criticism is very apt to adopt a method of scientific analysis which, it cannot be too often repeated, is in its essence inapplicable to work produced under the spur of imaginative invention. The scientific spirit that hungers for ordered classification, and seeks to account for everything which comes within the range of its survey by processes strictly logical, stands as a constant danger in the consideration of every form of art, whatever its chosen vehicle of expression. The representatives of separate and sometimes divergent currents of artistic activity will, at many points, be found to claim elements of deeper alliance with painters from whom, in regard to some particular line of development, they are sharply distinguished. Fra Angelico, for example, re-entered of his own choice into that exclusive

service of religion, the bonds of which had already been broken by the unfettered genius of Giotto; and this willing servitude imposed certain limitations upon his work as a painter from which others, even among his contemporaries, readily escaped. And yet it is not to be supposed that he was a stranger to those wider humanizing influences that were so deeply affecting the spiritual life of his time. The ecstasy of the human spirit, born of a mystic devotion to the teachings of Christianity, remains stamped upon his work as its most enduring characteristic; but charging and informing it there is to be recognised a sweetness and urbanity of outlook entirely absent in the more formal and conventional religious painting of an earlier epoch. And what is true of Fra Angelico is true also at a later time of Perugino, although the rapture of worship is here expressed with less individual sincerity and intensity. These signs of weakening and waning conviction that may be discerned in the art of Perugino, who had already exchanged the individual fervour of Angelico for a more conventional formula of sentimental piety, are further emphasised at a later hour in the too conscious spirit that infects the religious art of Fra Bartolommeo and Francia.

The same overlapping of divergent ideals is noticeable in the case of other masters of the Florentine school. It is not to be assumed, for example, that Ghirlandajo, whose talent associated itself so closely with the study of individual portraiture, was therefore devoid of those qualities of invention that characterised the triumphs of his greater associates and successors; while the genius of Botticelli, though its range of vision acknowledged no limitation of outlook, yet by reason of the intensity of imaginative insight that he brought to the interpretation of every theme, is able to reveal in his treatment of sacred subjects a depth of sympathy and a profound suggestion of mystic feeling that are unsurpassed by the painter of the frescoes of S. Marco. And again, if we look to the gradual development of the art of Genre which Fra Filippo by his intimate inspection of the varying moods of the human spirit may be

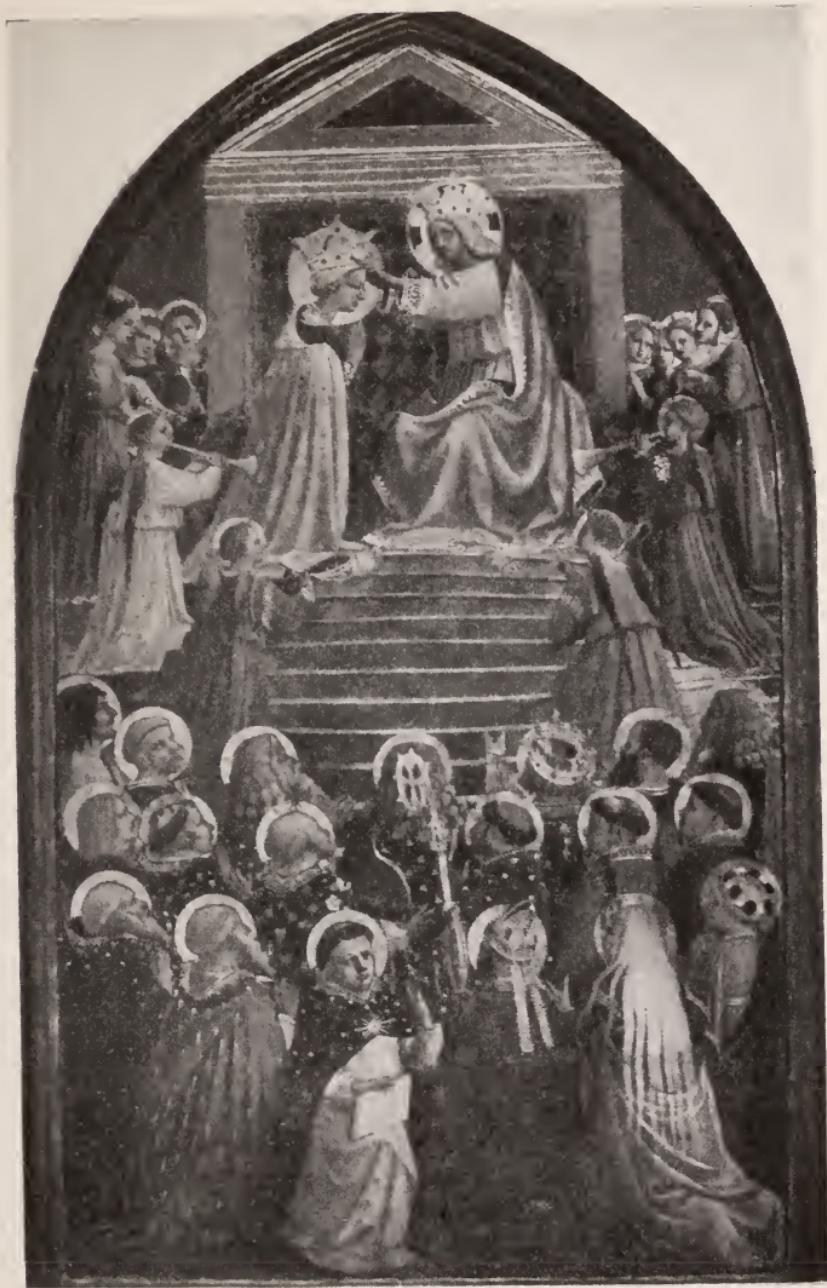
said to have initiated, and which afterwards became almost the sole preoccupation of the lesser talent of Benozzo Gozzoli, it would be manifestly absurd to assume for that reason that he did not contribute his full share to the perfecting of Florentine art as an instrument for the larger rendering of poetic ideas.

It will only be possible to treat very briefly of the individual masters of the Quattro-Cento, but before even so much as this is attempted it is necessary to fix the attention of the student upon the career of a great creator who, though not himself a painter, exercised the most potent influence upon the painters of his time. Donatello (1386–1466), in his work as a sculptor, stands beyond the scope of our present enquiry, and yet his achievement supplies one of the most important factors in the development of the painter's art, not only in Florence, but throughout the whole of Italy. It has already been observed that at no time in its story can the pictorial art of Tuscany be rightly understood unless we follow its development in linked association with the kindred arts of architecture and sculpture. The world of ideas on the illustration of which the whole genius of Florence was concentrated called for the combined support of all the arts that rest upon qualities of design: the consideration of Florentine painting, therefore, can never be divorced from that of work produced in marble or bronze, where the claim of design is paramount. It will be found that this essential and intimate alliance that Florentine painters of the Quattro-Cento freely acknowledged is also a recurrent phenomenon throughout the whole history of the painter's calling wherever its exponents, without deserting or violating the limitations proper to their craft, accept the added burden of interpreting the spiritual side of Man's nature.

It is not possible here to follow in detail the interchanging influence of the two callings in the progressive story of the Florentine school, but a study of the work of its sculptors would serve to show that in their earlier experiments they often sought to appropriate effects that are in their essence pictorial. The reliefs of Ghiberti and of Donatello

himself prove that both were partly captivated by those newly discovered laws of perspective that were destined to exercise so potent an influence upon the methods of the painter; and it was not till the advent of Verrocchio, who boasted complete mastery in both mediums, that their separate functions were clearly distinguished. But Donatello's influence on his time transcends all minor considerations of technical practice or of separate vehicles of expression. The new research of beauty that animated the labours of all the great spirits of the time, whatever the field they sought to explore, carried with it an ever increasing conquest of the truths of Nature; and Donatello stands pre-eminent among his contemporaries in broadening and deepening the foundations of reality that served as material for the perfected spiritual message revealed in the work of men like Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo.

Returning to the painters of the Quattro-Cento, we find on the threshold of the century three men whose work is typical of those separate streams of activity whose confluent forces bore painting to the full tide of the Renaissance. Paolo Uccello (1397–1475), who is worthily represented in our own National Gallery by *The Rout of San Romano*, ranks among the earliest of those who devoted themselves mainly to the technical problems of their art. A pupil of Lorenzo Ghiberti, he sought with unceasing effort to transfer to painting those principles of perspective and foreshortening he had acquired from his master, together with something of that uncompromising fidelity to nature that doubtless proceeded from his association with the more virile genius of Donatello. His contemporaries, Fra Angelico (1387–1455) and Masaccio (1401–1428), stand on a different plane, and claim by native gift a place in the central story of Florentine painting; for although in temperament and artistic purpose no two men could be more sharply contrasted, both inherited an integral part of that larger territory Giotto had conquered. Yet even in the case of Masaccio it was no more than a part, for despite the victories in design his ordered vision achieved, he lacked that piercing insight into



Anderson Photo.

The Museum of San Marco, Florence.

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN, BY FRA ANGELICO

the emotional truths of human character which had enabled Giotto to win, in a single assault, nearly the whole of the field pictorial art is competent to cover. Fra Angelico, indeed, laid no claim to the wider outlook that Masaccio could boast, and there is a well-defined sense wherein his art may be said to confess something of a retrograde movement. But if his spirit chose to dwell in a narrow chamber, and his eyes, as they gazed from the windows of his monkish cell, left partly unheeded the manifold beauties of the world at his feet, with the enlarged message of human passion and character therein newly revealed, but were fixed upon the unchanging glories of the celestial realm his soul already inhabited, there was, nevertheless, so deep a sincerity and such an unaffected purity in his uplifted and inspired vision that the limitations of his art are forgotten in its perfection.

As we turn now to Masaccio, whom Angelico outlived by nearly thirty years, we seem to enter at one step into another and a different world. These two men, whom the accident of time made comrades, in natural genius and deliberate ambition would seem scarcely to belong to the same epoch; for as Angelico's painting presented in perfected form the ideal of the past, there was already in Masaccio's art the seed and the promise of all that Florentine painting was destined afterwards to achieve. Apart, indeed, from comparison, the swift maturity of Masaccio's genius, together with its masterly anticipation of future conquest, is almost disconcerting. No more than twenty-seven years of age at the time of his death, his great frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel of the Carmine must have been begun when he had only recently attained his majority; and yet they prove him to have possessed a precocity of power that in the whole history of Art Raphael alone can be said to rival. That his genius should have been sometimes compared with that of the great master of Urbino is, on other grounds, natural enough, for there is in the work of both so perfect an agreement between the ideal purpose that animated them and the means needed for its expression that it is impossible

not to admit the fitness of the verdict that associates them. From another point of view he has been acclaimed as the inheritor and transmitter of the full spiritual revelation made by Giotto; but this is a pretension that even the most sympathetic appreciation of Masaccio's powers fails to sustain. Giotto, perhaps the greatest inventor in design that painting has ever known, worked under the passionate pressure of ideas that crowded upon his spirit and called for utterance in a language not yet fully responsive to his needs. There is no such sense of urgency in the work of Masaccio. Of all Florentine painters of the fifteenth century he is perhaps the most impersonal, the most objective in his vision. The premature termination of his career, while it leaves us in wonderment at his marvellous accomplishment, yields scarcely a hint of still unsatisfied ambition: he had already, it would seem, reached that stage of tranquil assurance in the practice of his art which to other men comes only as the fruit of a prolonged apprenticeship in its service. For, as there is no trace in any part of his work of the emotional intensity of Fra Angelico, there is but little evidence of that consuming central fire which fed the prodigal forces that set Giotto in the ranks of the greatest creators of all time.

The qualities of temperance and restraint which distinguished Masaccio's invention specially fitted him for the great task he was summoned to accomplish. If the claims of the legend in its purely poetical aspect were for him never so insistent as to embarrass the full and free exercise of his extraordinary gifts as a master of design, the appeal of painting in the newly awakened sense of its boundless resources as an instrument of expression found a response in every fibre of his being.

His unrivalled gifts as a craftsman enabled him to grant to those ideal conceptions, which other men of the century often probed with a deeper intensity of imaginative vision, a statelier garment of the flesh than they had worn in the work of any of his predecessors or his contemporaries. The separate figures of his design, though they are not so deeply pledged to the emotional message it is sought to convey, are



Anderson Photo.

THE TRIBUTE-MONEY, BY MASACCIO

The Carmine, Florence.

endowed with a monumental dignity and an epic grandeur that do unquestionably place him in direct relation with Raphael, and even seem to anticipate something of that tranquil preoccupation with the merely ornamental problems of art that is characteristic of a later period, when the fever of invention had spent itself, and the painter found leisure to elaborate and embroider the decorative setting of the theme he sought to illustrate. If, therefore, at the core of their genius there is more of contrast than affinity between Giotto and Masaccio, and if the faultless perception of the intuitive movements of the human form, as they express the abiding facts of character and the more elemental truths of emotion which are among the sovereign gifts of Raphael, lay beyond the reach of the painter of the Carmine, the advent of Masaccio's wondrous power, coming at so early a date in the story of Florentine painting, remains an astounding phenomenon and assures to its possessor a dominating place in the brief and brilliant story of the school to which he belonged.

In the richness of his humanity, and the more generous appreciation of varied types of character and alternating moods of feeling, the painter who now claims consideration stands nearer to Giotto than did either Angelico or Masaccio. Like all painters possessed of gifts of the first order Lippo Lippi evades all attempts at exact classification. He joined to the genius of the illustrator a full and minute observation of the lighter truths of character and the subtler variations of facial expression that set him on the one hand in the full current of Florentine painting considered as a vehicle for the expression of ideas; and grant to him under another aspect a leading place in that branch of art, of which he may almost be said to be the originator, that at a later period developed into the painting of *Genre*. For although the declared subjects of his brush are still those imposed by the painter's formal allegiance to the church, what is chiefly characteristic in his treatment of them is the ever brimming sense of life that is constantly in excess of the particular needs of the chosen theme.



Anderson Photo.

THE CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN, BY FILIPPO LIPPI

Academy, Florence.

If the student will compare his great picture of *The Coronation of the Virgin* in the Academy at Florence with even the most perfect of Fra Angelico's ecstatic visions, he will be able to realise at once the fuller sense of humanity possessed by his less orthodox contemporary. This unfettered sympathy with the manifold moods of life belonged in essence also to Giotto, but it was exhibited in the art of Filippo Lippi with an intimacy of interpretation that was peculiarly his own; and so successfully did he explore the resources of facial expression that we may count as an integral part of his achievement the signs of a latent sense of a humour that is inevitably characteristic of all art that boasts a broad basis of humanity. Further illustration of this quality is found in the exquisite *Madonna and Child* of the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, where the laughing countenance of the angel who supports the infant Christ bears witness to his constant desire to emphasise that spirit of urbanity which may be said to pervade his outlook upon life.

Fra Filippo's kinship with the genius of Giotto, his ability, that is to say, to surrender himself wholly to the central motive of the theme chosen for illustration, is more decisively announced in his frescoes in the cathedral at Prato. To select only one group out of many, the composition of *St. John leaving his Father's House* may be quoted as an instance where the pursuit of the idea, as so often in the case of Giotto, yields a kind of beauty in design that is not to be attained by any uninspired obedience to accepted rules of art. We must cast our eyes forward to the advent of Leonardo himself in order to witness the full accomplishment of all the human countenance can convey that was forecast by the genius of Lippi. Other painters indeed arose in the intervening period who developed in special directions the movement which Lippi had initiated, but his outlook, at once searching and urbane though limited by an incomplete command of technical resource, was not surpassed by any of his immediate successors. In the hands of Leonardo, whose work gathered together all the separate threads that mark



Anderson Photo.

Uffizi, Florence.

VIRGIN AND CHILD, BY FILIPPO LIPPI

the intervening period of Florentine painting, Lippi's grasp of human character was still further extended and enlarged, while upon this wider empire of physical truth there was grafted a spiritual message which he could make at will as concentrated as that of Fra Angelico and as poetically significant as that of Botticelli.

But before we pass from the consideration of Lippo Lippi's contribution to Florentine art it will be interesting to follow for a moment another stream of development that may be said to have almost had its spring in his work. The gradual emergence of individual character as it liberated itself on the one hand from the settled types which served the purpose of the earlier painters; and as it again and again at a later period broke away from the control of artists whose professed object was still the illustration of themes of spiritual significance, is one of the most fascinating branches of inquiry to the student of modern painting.

In common with nearly all else that later masters of the school expanded and developed, the germ of this element of portraiture may be found in the painting of Giotto himself. Even in the most dramatic of his compositions each separate face already begins to assert its own identity; but in the art of Lippo Lippi, where the domination of the idea misses something of Giotto's concentration, the assertion of individual character is carried a step further and is accompanied by a more liberal observation of those varied moods of feeling belonging to faces that are not wholly pledged to the central conception. This incipient sense of portraiture, combined with the record of a free play of emotion, suggested less by the particular theme than by the particular individuality, was destined to prove of far-reaching influence among a powerful group of Florentine painters.

From the time of Lippi to the close of Florentine art, portraiture plays a part that is to be followed with ever increasing interest. It becomes indeed the touchstone by which the right of different masters to share in the imaginative glories of painting may be measured and tested. Again and again we are called upon to note how the fuller



Anderson Photo.

S. Maria Novella, Florence.

THE BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN, BY DOMENICO GHIRLANDAIO

mastery of expression acquired in its pursuit is subdued afresh by the greater masters of imaginative invention to the purpose that controls their design; while in the hands of men whose genius owned no such deep alliance with the poetical or dramatic demands of the subject it becomes in itself of dominating influence and authority. Domenico Ghirlandajo illustrates with superlative power this tendency to break away from the authority of the idea. As a master of his craft he employed with unrivalled ability all the gathered resources which his predecessors, differently inspired, had brought to the service of painting. The great traditions of style which set Florence at the head of all schools that depend upon design he frankly accepted, and in his own practice considerably enlarged; but despite this external alliance with the formal characteristics of the Florentine school the essential quality of his genius confesses another impulse that bears him in a different direction; and for this reason the beautiful work he produced has sometimes been imperfectly appreciated. He has been unduly censured for lack of qualities to which in essence his painting lays no claim. That he was engaged upon the painting of subjects that yielded in other hands a kind of beauty over which he had no control is an accident of his time. At another epoch in art his extraordinary powers of dignified and sedate portraiture would doubtless have found exercise in subjects more congenial to his native gifts; it may perhaps even be conceded that he might have found by natural inclination a more fitting place among those painters of the North who carried this same feeling for portraiture to its ultimate triumph.

These realistic tendencies, already clearly manifest in the art of Ghirlandajo, found more decisive expression in the work of men who stand outside the strict confines of the Florentine school. The first, and in some sense the greatest of these, was Piero della Francesca, and to his name must be added that of his distinguished pupils, Lucca Signorelli and Melozzo da Forli. In all that science can rightly contribute to the resources of the artist Piero della Francesca

holds a foremost place. The consideration of merely technical problems in painting lies beyond the scope of the present essay, but the student who wishes to understand the advances in this direction accomplished in the fifteenth century must needs study with attention the work of Piero della Francesca and that of his distinguished pupils. They no less deserve consideration for the further development they exhibit of those naturalistic tendencies associated with the study of portraiture, though we may remind ourselves once more that their work touches at many points the more characteristic phases of Florentine design which spring from its devotion to the art of ideal representation. This, as we shall see, is particularly applicable to Signorelli, who on one side of his prodigal genius stands in direct relation to the main current of Florentine art as it flowed onward from Giotto and took final shape in the work of Leonardo and Michelangelo.

It must not, however, be forgotten that the study of individual form and feature was a factor in the development of the Florentine school that is found in sculpture no less than in painting, and the increased sense of reality which it engendered was destined to enrich and enlarge the resources of expression even in those painters who worked only under the impulse of the ideal. This is made abundantly clear in the final victories achieved by Raphael, Leonardo, and Michelangelo, and it is perceptible even in the work of Botticelli, who, of all painters of imaginative purpose, would seem at first sight to owe but little to the realists among his contemporaries.

Between Giotto and Michelangelo, Botticelli is unquestionably the most eminent figure as representing all that is most deeply characteristic in Florentine art. Though contemporary with Ghirlandajo, he reveals at every point the most absolute divergence of temperament and practice. Ghirlandajo sums up all that painting had so far accomplished as a medium for the full and faithful representation of nature, whilst Botticelli, constantly preoccupied with the idea that governed his design, handles the actualities of the

world only to re-shape them into a vocabulary for the utterance of the spiritual message which wholly absorbed him.

Botticelli's art does not even affect to probe the varied and lighter moods of human feeling of which Fra Filippo's



Anderson Photo.

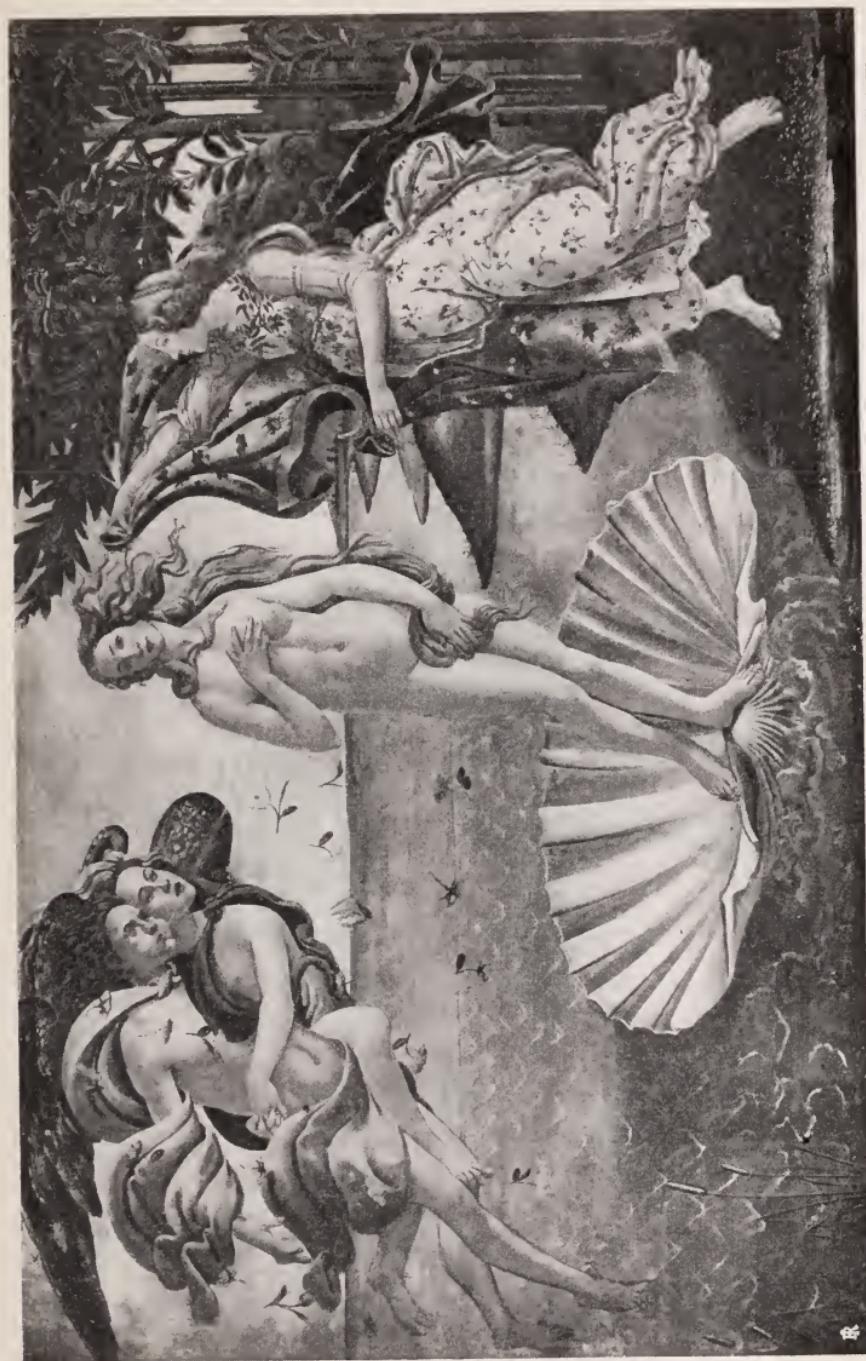
Uffizi, Florence.

THE MAGNIFICAT, BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI

painting is the genial reflex. In the intensity of his style, an intensity bred of his close attachment to the particular theme, his art in one aspect may be said to resemble that of Fra Angelico; but whereas Angelico rarely stepped beyond the limits of the religious faith he sought to serve,

the spirit of reverence and even of worship which equally animates Botticelli found an almost limitless field for their exercise. That concentrated devotion to his subject which Angelico dedicated wholly to the service of the church, Botticelli brought to the treatment of every theme, Christian or Pagan. Nowhere, not even in the final triumphs of the Florentine school, is the absolute control of the imagination more completely asserted. Among Tuscan painters of the fifteenth century he stands out as pre-eminently the poet of them all. And yet the poetical element in his painting is no foreign importation clumsily grafted upon the language appropriate to pictorial design. In every work from his hand it is seen to be inseparable from the medium he employs, so that we are made to confess in presence of the result he achieves that the rich harvest of spiritual beauty he has garnered could have been recaptured by no other means than those that fall fitly within the province of the painter.

It has already been noted how in the general movement of painting the pendulum is constantly swaying between the opposite poles of symbol and illusion; and Botticelli may be cited as the most convinced and the most bewitching of the symbolists. There is hardly a line of his curiously invented patterns of design, there is no tiny fragment in the assorted harmonies of his colour, radiant or subdued, that is not summoned there for the special service of the theme he seeks to illustrate. Of the dispassionate imitation of Nature, there is here no trace, and if the student were forced to rely upon a single instance wherein is clearly marked off the inherent distinction between the art of Florence and that of Venice, he could do no better than cite the name of Sandro Botticelli. For in his work the resources no less than the limitations of an art that rejects the immediate allurements of mere imitation are sharply and frankly avowed; and within the confines of the Florentine school itself his art embodies more completely than that of any other master the intensity of conviction belonging to those earlier professors who were exclusively employed in



Anderson Photo.

THE BIRTH OF VENUS, BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI

Uffizi, Florence.

rendering the mystic raptures of the Christian faith, combined with that wider and deeper spiritual significance to which the genius of Leonardo and Michelangelo gave final expression.

Fra Angelico himself, whose cloistered vision rarely strayed beyond the themes with which the church supplied him, has produced nothing of greater intensity in the region of religious feeling than may be matched in the sacred pictures of Botticelli; and yet even here a deeper note, as of wistful longing and tragic anticipation born of a wider survey of the changing fortunes of man, imports a new element of spiritual drama that reappears no less surely in his rendering of classical legend. In order to realise how supreme in this respect is the position of Botticelli it is instructive to bring into comparison the achievement of Luca Signorelli. Contemporaries for upwards of sixty years, they both exhibited qualities of invention that exercised a dominating influence upon their technical practice. Like Botticelli, Signorelli passed, by a transition that left no mark of any change of spiritual outlook, from the interpretation of themes of religious significance to the rendering of Pagan legends imported into the arena of art through the newly awakened enthusiasm for antiquity begotten of the Renaissance; and as a further coincidence in the direction of their studies, it may be added that both were led to find in Dante a source of inspiration that was fruitful in result. And yet the contrast between these two men is perhaps even more striking than their affinity. In breadth and energy of invention Signorelli holds a place wherein Botticelli is scarcely a competitor, and his power of handling a complex composition, supported by a command over the realities of human form in movement and action, developing in this respect the earlier researches of Antonio Pollajuolo, leaves him with no rival in his own generation, and marks him off as the direct precursor of Michelangelo himself. But although he sought to control a wider empire of reality, he did not always equal, and never could be said to have surpassed, Botticelli in the complete subjugation of his material to the central



Anderson & Co. Photo.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE DAMNED, BY LUCA SIGNORELLI

From the Fresco at Orvieto.



W. A. Mansell Photo.

National Gallery, London.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. SEBASTIAN, BY ANTONIO POLLAJUOLO

motive of his design. There is much in nearly every great composition by Signorelli which goes to prove that the claims of realism sometimes outran the purpose that sought to comprehend them. In this sense his mastery over the material he had collected is not always complete; there are times when the extraordinary fertility of his resources seems to break away from the binding force of the idea, times also when he is tempted to employ a kind of rhetoric in expression into which Botticelli was never for a moment betrayed.

This is in part due to a certain scenic quality that was a marked characteristic in the development of Umbrian painting. Among Florentine painters of the first rank the figures dominate the background, so nearly absorbing the allotted space that the rendering of the particular environment takes everywhere a subordinate place and is sometimes even reduced to a symbol or a suggestion. But in the work of several of the Umbrian painters the scene in which the action is set gradually assumes a more important function, and the relation of the figures to their background is modified to a degree that almost constitutes a revolution.

Noticeable in Signorelli, this change is first emphatically declared in the art of Perugino, where the dramatic or spiritual message to be conveyed by the central composition assumes a new and larger significance from the more spacious area in which it is presented. This indeed may be counted Perugino's most notable contribution to the painting of his time. In central invention he adds nothing which the genius of Fra Angelico had not already in essence forestalled, whilst the lack of sustained conviction in the imaginative realities of his subject stamps much of his religious work, despite its unfailing quality of sweetness, as being almost conventional. But he did unquestionably carry forward in association with Signorelli that sense of scenic grandeur which finally assumes in the work of Raphael an epic character. Something of the same quality with a larger reliance upon the elements of portraiture which Perugino did not exhibit is to be found also in the work of Pinturicchio.

The last of the Florentine painters of the Quattro-Cento calling for separate mention is Filippino Lippi (1458-1504). His work, sometimes unequal, but at its best of the most



Anderson Photo.

Pitti Palace, Florence.

DEPOSITION, BY PIETRO PERUGINO

fascinating quality, links together the earlier and the later influences that were at work in the Tuscan capital. The natural son of Fra Filippo, he reveals in his earlier experiments the impress of his father's style. In 1472 he found a

place in the workshop of Botticelli, whose genius is plainly recalled in some of Filippino's more delicate creations, while, in his frescoes in the Strozzi Chapel of Santa Maria Novella,



Anderson Photo.

Church of the Badia, Florence.

THE VIRGIN APPEARING TO ST. BERNARD, BY FILIPPINO LIPPI

there is the clearest evidence that he was at that time under the sway of Leonardo da Vinci. The fanciful extravagance that marks some of these compositions has exposed Filippino to much unfavourable criticism, but side by side with defects that can be neither ignored nor denied are to be found individual forms and faces of extraordinary grace and charm.

It is, however, in his easel pictures that Filippino is to be seen at his best, and that best is hard to beat, even among the most gifted of his contemporaries: if he had left behind him nothing but *The Virgin Appearing to St. Bernard*, in the Church of the Badia, which was executed about the year 1482, and *The Virgin and Child with Saints* that is ascribed to the year 1488, and is now in the Church of San Spirito, his place among the greatest of the Quattro-Cento Florentines would still be assured. It would be hard to find anywhere in the painting of that time a conception more touching and more restrained in its sentiment, or simpler and more impressive in its design, than the second of these two pictures. Such a work claims for its author the possession of some of the highest qualities that painting can boast, and whatever decline may be acknowledged in the products of later years, the genius he undoubtedly owned still animates even the worst of the Strozzi frescoes.

It may be useful at this point that we should gather up the different threads of development as they were afterwards combined and enlarged by the transcendent genius of Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo. At its dawn in the hands of Giotto, we have seen how art, hitherto confined within traditional limits, was suddenly liberated through the force of his genius so as to include the manifold emotions of humanity which had been awakened by the romantic spirit of the North; and which received their final embodiment through the Classic influences that were born of the Renaissance. We have traced the survival of the purely religious element in painting, accepted with all its essential limitations by the deliberate choice of Fra Angelico, and we have sought to show how the broader sense of humanity, first asserted by Giotto himself, was gradually enriched and sweetened by the inclusion of the lighter as well as the deeper elements of character.

The research of these realities inevitably led to a more profound study of the human form and face as instruments of ideal expression. Art began to look at the features of men and women with a new sense of the spiritual revelation they



Church of S. Spirito, Florence.

VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH SAINTS, BY FILIPPINO LIPPI

Altanari Photo.

might be made to confess, and from the initial experiments of Fra Filippo Lippi up to the complete mastery attained by



Anderson Photo.

Palazzo Riccardi, Florence.

THE JOURNEY OF THE WISE MEN, BY BENOZZO GOZZOLI

Leonardo, the human countenance became an absorbing subject of study.

In the probing of the more permanent elements of character that underlie any passing mood of emotion, and in the

exploration of all the myriad changes it is capable of displaying, from the most transient and fleeting expressions that are born of the lighter issues of life to the graver and profounder impress that springs of the inevitable tragedy of our human fortunes, the art of the painters of Florence exhibits some of its mightiest attributes.

LEONARDO DA VINCI, MICHELANGELO, AND RAPHAEL

THAT three of the greatest masters of design the world has ever known, or, it may be, is ever likely to know, should have been contemporaries and associates in the city of Florence, and that Raphael, the youngest of the three, who has left an impress upon pictorial art that time can neither diminish nor efface, should have died when he was not yet twenty-eight years of age, must rank among the miracles in the history of genius that lie beyond the power of philosophy to explain. But the fact itself is unassailable, and would alone suffice to set the great school of Tuscany upon a pedestal of unchallenged supremacy. Each of these three great men possessed that comprehensive grasp of nature, combined with the ever present control of the imaginative spirit which is the unfailing sign of supreme mastery in the region of creative art; and although this quality they shared in common, to each belong special characteristics that distinguish their separate individualities.

The first of this great triumvirate, in point of date, is Leonardo da Vinci, who came into the world twenty-three years before Michelangelo, and upwards of thirty years earlier than Raphael. The unquestioned paintings from his hand are few in number, and the greatest of them, the fresco of *The Last Supper* at Milan, has long been an irreparable ruin; but there has been preserved to the world a very large number of Leonardo's original drawings, affording ample material for the appreciation of his extraordinary powers. Speaking generally, it may be said that the drawings of the old masters form a subject of study which no student who desires to understand them can afford to neglect, and here

photography, though powerless to reproduce the charms of colour, enables us to follow, almost at first hand, the growth of individual genius as it shows itself more particularly in the constant interdependence between the direct observation of nature and the exercise of the creative faculty.

In considering the art of Florence, where the claims of design are paramount, these preliminary studies are of unsurpassed interest. The means employed are here so simple that our attention is carried at once to what is essential in the master's style, and we are able to measure, in a manner that is not possible in the consideration of the finished painting, the delicate process through which the precise rendering of reality is gradually subdued to the imaginative purpose in the service of which it is employed.

In the work of no artist is this so clearly visible as in that of Leonardo: indeed, it may be safely said that without the evidence of his drawings, we might be in danger of missing altogether the secret of his power. For here we are shown, in a way that his finished paintings can scarcely do more than suggest, the workings of that inexhaustible spirit of curiosity that often carried him, in his researches, beyond the confines of art.

Like all men of supreme endowment, we are left to wonder in the presence of the manifold workings of his mind, exhibited in his drawings, whether the choice of the particular calling of the painter was not, in some sense, an accident, and whether his greatness might not have been equally established if his genius had chosen a different channel of expression. This, indeed, is the final stamp and seal of all genius of the first order, whose forces, overflowing the special limits assigned to them, suggest a kind of universality of power which is clearly marked off from the innate aptitude for a particular form of expression belonging to men of narrower outlook.

Certainly in the case of Leonardo, the sense that his spirit inhabited a larger world than could be mirrored by any single form of artistic activity is clearly indicated in the vast field of study his drawings cover. At every turn we encounter



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Royal Academy, London.

VIRGIN AND ST. ANNE (CARTOON), BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

evidence of powers that combine the patient and dispassionate research appropriate to the man of science with the quickened and more inspired vision that is only born of an unquenchable love of beauty. As we pass under review the collections of his drawings at Windsor, at Venice, and in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, we find that there was no aspect of nature he did not investigate, and that upon his record of them all there is left the impress of that strange intensity of style that gives to his work as an artist something of mysterious fascination.

And now, if we direct our attention solely to that body of his work which is concerned with his achievements as an artist, we shall see how his control over the springs of beauty is enforced and enriched at every turn by his ever widening and ever deepened survey of the secrets of nature. I have said that each one of the three great artists I have named puts forward, in his work, a distinctive claim to recognition. The special claim of Leonardo may be said to reside in his unapproachable power over the subtleties of character as they are expressed through the medium of the human countenance. No artist has ever approached him in his presentation of the mystery of life as it is half revealed and half withheld by the subtle play of facial movement. Here there was nothing either of resident character or transient mood of feeling that escaped his pencil. He could register, without arresting, the most fleeting smile; and without disturbing the surface upon which these lighter realities are mirrored could, at the same time, lay bare the deeper problems of the spirit that lay beneath them.

I have already traced this growing mastery over the human face as it was betrayed, on the one hand, in the work of painters directly inspired by the imagination, and, on the other, as it sought to mark, with increasing power, those individual characteristics which belong to the art of portraiture. Leonardo resumed with perfect mastery all that had been won in these separate fields; he reasserted the dominion of the imagination without surrender of those larger claims of reality his predecessors had partly acknowledged.

In the painting first of Filippo Lippi, and at a later time of Botticelli, art had already found a way to mirror those secrets of the spirit that do not need the summons of any particular impulse to call them into being, and in another direction, the tendency towards individual portraiture, as it found utterance at the hands of a group of painters, amongst whom Ghirlandajo stands pre-eminent, has served as a constant counterpoise to the inevitable tendency in all ideal art towards the abstract and the impersonal. But Florentine painting, though it had witnessed these separate developments, waited the advent of Leonardo's absolute mastery in order that they might be completely fused and combined. To him, almost alone, in the history of art, belongs the power of preserving the sense of individuality without intercepting the larger poetical message.

The failure of all art that parts with this sense of individuality is made evident again and again in the chequered history of the painter's calling. It very speedily overtook the art of Italy, as is plainly evident in the later achievements of the school of the Caracci, and it reappears, with increased emphasis, at a much later period, in the frigid inventions of the classical schools of the closing years of the eighteenth and the beginnings of the nineteenth century. David in France, Cornelius and Kaulbach in Germany, and in our own country, men like Barry and Haydon, have all left behind them a series of melancholy monuments of the fate that surely overtakes ideal art when it has lost touch with individual humanity.

The art of Leonardo was exposed to no such dangers. With him the revelation of the larger mysteries of the spirit is securely grafted upon faces that are alert with the intimate appeal that is born of the quickened sense of distinctive personality. By his genius he fashioned a type of beauty that he was able to transmit as an inheritance to his followers: but, in perfecting this type, he never lost the magic that only a constant recurrence to nature can supply. It is true, indeed, that no one of his disciples was sufficiently endowed to take over the whole of the territory his



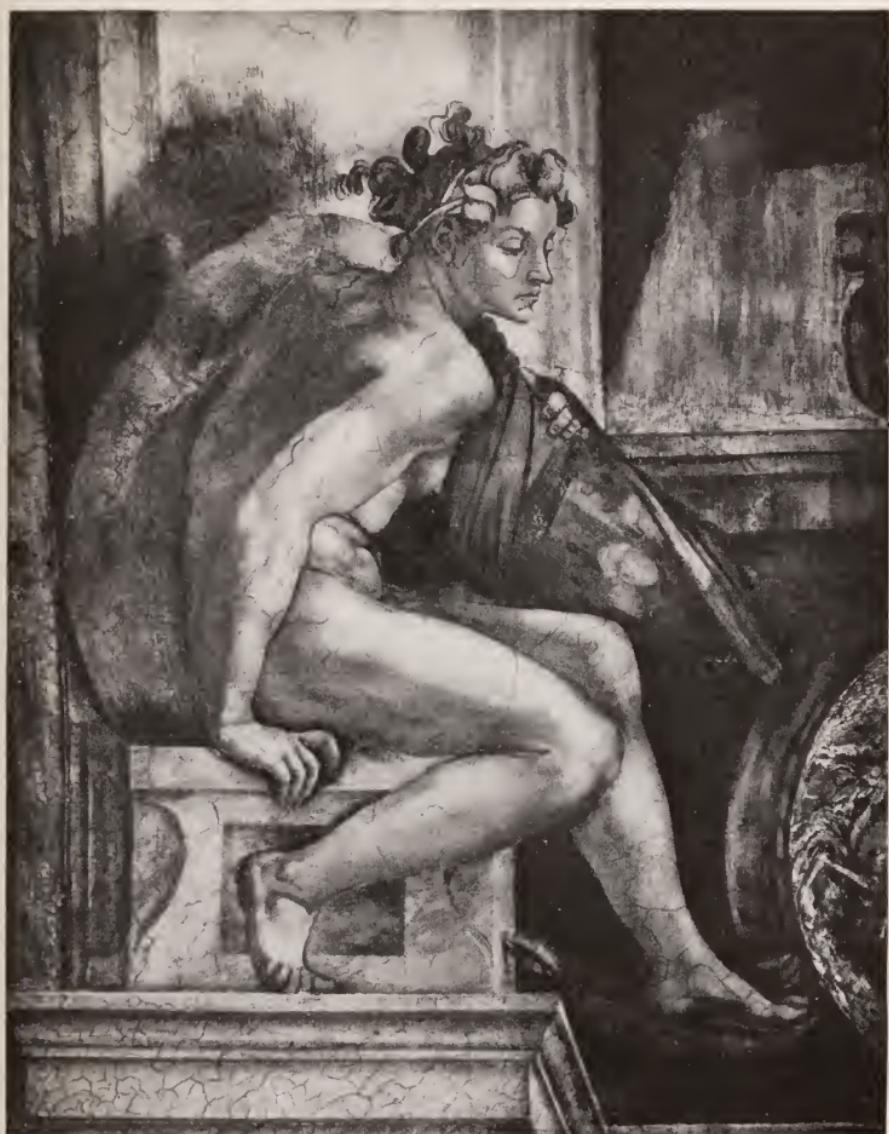
Alinari Photo.

Louvre, Paris.

LA VIERGE AUX ROCHERS, BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

genius had won, but in the lovable art of Bernardino Luini we are able to recognise to what sweet uses this larger conquest of the capabilities of expression in the human countenance could be applied. No traveller to Milan should miss the enchanting experience that may be gained by a visit to the church at Saronno. The ruined beauty of Luini's work in Sant' Ambrogio in Milan itself scarcely prepares the student for the perfection of his work at Saronno. No painter of all Italy better understood the resources of fresco, and there are few surviving examples of this branch of art that are more perfectly preserved. In the beautiful faces that throng these paintings at Saronno the overwhelming influence of Leonardo's genius is plainly marked, and no less plainly is it made manifest that, though his gifted pupil was powerless to renew the whole of Leonardo's spiritual message, yet, in virtue of this very limitation, he was able to add a kind of intimate charm that was not always possible to the greater genius of his master. The pervading serenity and sweetness of almost every character he introduces into his design misses, as we are forced to acknowledge, something of the deeper significance that belongs to Leonardo's more penetrating vision; but so much of beauty as may be detached from this larger outlook Luini appropriated in a form that makes a bewitching appeal to the imagination.

What the initiative of Leonardo had effected for the face, Michelangelo accomplished for the human form as a whole. It is not necessary, and it would not be possible in a work of this kind, to attempt any complete estimate of Michelangelo's genius, a genius perhaps the greatest that has illumined the world of art since the days of Phidias. In the presence of his sculptured tombs at Florence, or of the stupendous decoration of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, beauty, in the ordinary sense of the word, is not perhaps the quality that first impresses itself. Rather, it may be said, that the first encounter with any one of his creations leaves us overwhelmed with an unapproachable sense of vitality so full and inexhaustible that it lifts the forms, through which it is



Anderson Photo.

From Ceiling of Sistine Chapel, Rome.

DECORATIVE FIGURE, BY MICHELANGELO

expressed, to a stature almost superhuman. The Titanic figures he calls into being seem as though they were created to bear the full burdens of the human spirit. Whatever the simple duty in which they are employed,—and, as we gaze at the Sistine ceiling, we may note that in nearly every case the chosen action is only indicative of some spontaneous movement detached from any special emotional impulse,—we are made to feel that, even in such simple service, they announce themselves as the bearers of a larger mission. In face and form they are made to mirror the changing fortunes of man's destiny, and are freighted with the message of passionate experience and unsatisfied aspiration that links the man's tragic fate with the sense of the indomitable will that seeks to pierce the impenetrable veil overshadowing him.

In his treatment of form Michelangelo has been sometimes reproached for the lack of the sense of repose that is assumed to be the essential quality of classic art. The reproach is wholly undeserved, and is partly based upon the study of inferior examples of Greco-Roman sculpture, wherein repose is secured at the cost of vitality. Travellers flock to Rome in order to obtain a knowledge of the classic spirit as it found expression in art, but, in truth, a single figure from the pediment of the Parthenon in the British Museum affords a surer index of the deathless attributes of Greek art than all the boasted treasures of the Vatican galleries, with their unending procession of statues, produced by men whose work is already infected with the sure signs of decay. For, in the study of Phidias, we shall learn that the sense of unresting and unceasing movement was no less an integral part of Greek art in its prime than it was of the art of Michelangelo; and that the quality of repose belongs as emphatically to the author of the figures upon the Florentine tombs as to the carver of the figures of the Fates upon the pediment of the Parthenon. To reflect the momentary poise of the body, between completed and impending movement, has been the object of all the greatest art of every age, and no artist has ever lived who could



Anderson Photo.

From Ceiling of Sistine Chapel, Rome.

THE CREATION OF MAN, BY MICHELANGELO

render the magic of its capture with more assured power than Michelangelo possessed.

The essential character of the art of Raphael does not so readily lend itself to precise definition. Its finer essence eludes and escapes formal analysis, and, although his native gifts did not comprehend any deep vision into the passionate truths of human character the pressure of life calls into being, yet they exhibit a more comprehensive survey of such enduring elements of beauty as art is competent to render than is to be found in the work of either of his great contemporaries. And in this sense he represents the culminating triumph of the Renaissance in so far as it sought to recapture the serene spirit of ancient art. When we think of the unfathomable mysteries of human character that are veiled beneath the haunting smile upon the most beautiful faces of Leonardo, or of the record of tragic experience mirrored in Michelangelo's mighty creations, we are tempted to ask in Shakespeare's matchless words,

“How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea
Whose action is no stronger than a flower.”

And yet, for all time, the flowerlike action of those elements of beauty over which Raphael held assured command must remain above the reach of assault. Raphael himself would seem to have been scarcely conscious of the worth of the separate message he was destined to bequeath to the world. During the later progress of his career he willingly submitted himself to the influence both of Leonardo and of Michelangelo. What youth, indeed, born in such a fortunate hour, could possibly escape the dominating authority exercised by such contemporaries. Raphael least of all: for it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of his individuality that it was at once the most readily susceptible, and at the same time the most completely independent. This is already clearly manifest in the work produced while he was still under the dominion of Perugino. In these youthful essays the assertion of the distinctively personal note is so

gradual and so temperate that it is difficult immediately to realise how much he willingly accepted from his master, how much more was exclusively his own. He broke so gently with the tradition established by his teacher, so insensibly enlarged upon his narrower outlook and less perfect practice, that it is never possible to detect the signs of conflict or rebellion.

Perhaps he was himself unaware how small in essence was the extent of his indebtedness, how immeasurable the wealth that was added by his own genius. The full beauty of the message his art embodies can, indeed, only be fully measured as we note how small a part of it was communicable even to the most gifted of his followers in the group of assistants he gathered about him for the execution of his great work in Rome. Giulio Romano, Polidoro Caravaggio, Giovanni da Udine, Pierino del Vaga, Timoteo della Vite,—there was not one who can be said to have appreciated the secret that makes his art immortal. And yet, when he is set in direct competition with the greatest of his predecessors, or contemporaries, differently endowed, his art has to confess a comparative failure. In the rendering of ideas, in the representation of drama, he falls far short of the attainments of Leonardo and Michelangelo, while in the interpretation of devotional feeling, it is easy to summon from the past the names of men who must be confessed to be his superiors. Raphael's Madonnas hold a place of unapproachable supremacy, and yet one upturned face from amid the thronging angels imaged by Fra Angelico enshrines more of religious rapture than all the lovely faces of Raphael, even including the superb example of the Madonna of San Sisto in the gallery of Dresden.

To the earlier painter there was but one motive for art, as for life. Every gesture to be lovely must be a gesture of adoration, and all possible changes of human emotion are only significant to him as they become merged in the ecstasy of worship. Raphael's outlook, even when he was engaged upon the most sacred themes, was far different. Whatever of the divine enters into his representation of the



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Dresden Gallery.

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD (Part of the Picture), BY RAPHAEL

mother of Our Lord springs out of that deeper revelation of purely human elements which his genius, at once searching and serene, was able to command. The tenderness of motherhood, the unconscious innocence of childhood, embodying a human relationship, ever unchanging and yet ever varied, these are the elemental truths that were for him all sufficing, and from which his genius was able to draw a message of beauty that time has left unchallenged. In short, the Holy Mother and Child, as depicted by Raphael, are more human than divine, or are divine by right of their humanity, and not by any deliberate seeking for religious inspiration.

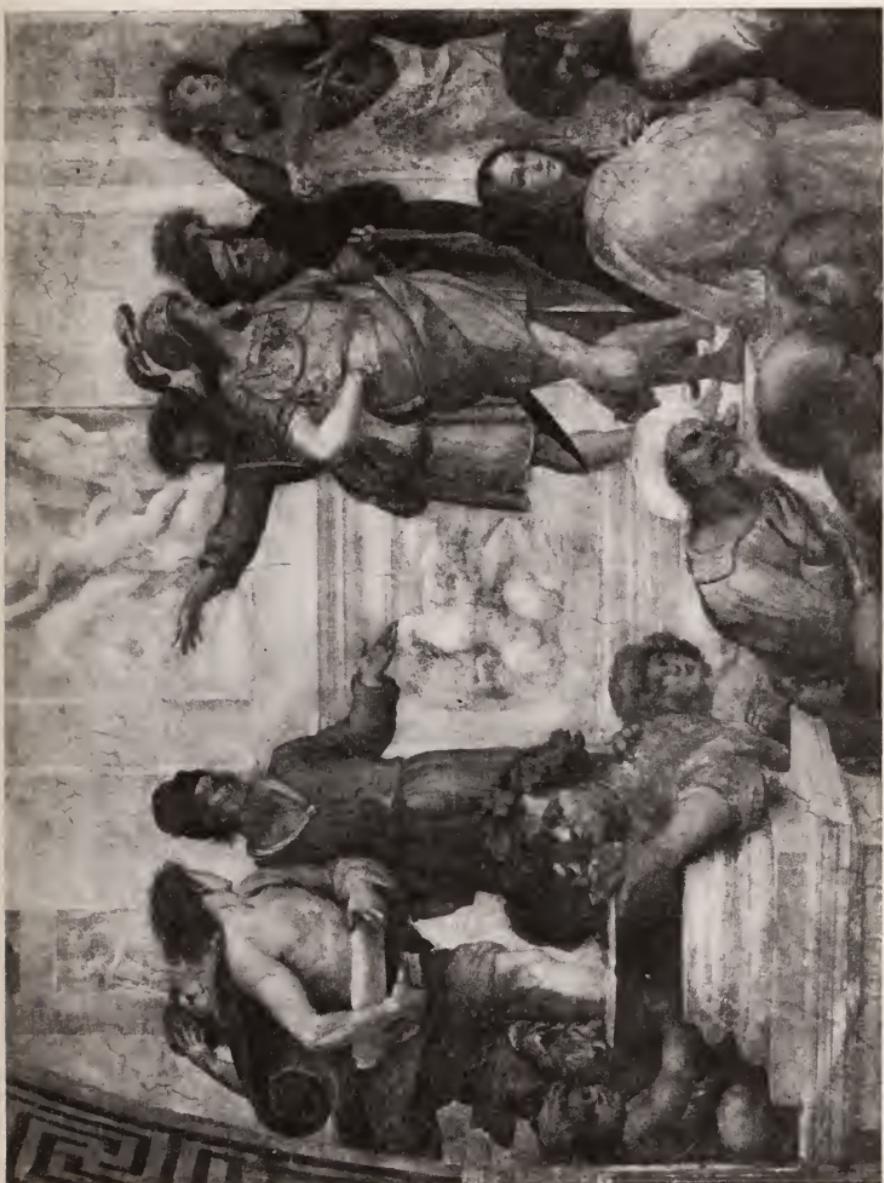
It is the privilege of the highest genius to be at once familiar and sublime; to seem to be occupied merely with common realities, and yet so to interpret them as to make them the bearers of a larger spiritual message. The elemental beauty of life, as it renews itself again and again after all its changing experiences of passion, this was the theme upon which Raphael's genius, as an independent force, found unwearied and unrivalled employment. And it is here that his art approaches so closely in its spirit to the spirit which animated the sculptors of the antique world. As often as he sought to probe those more acute crises of emotional experience which overtake humanity in its passage through the vicissitudes of life, so often is it seen that his genius treads on alien ground, where he moves less securely. There enters, at such times, into his work a sense of conscious purpose, and even of deliberate effort, that prove him to be engaged upon a task that lies beyond the range of his powers. The means necessary for the expression of such truths he was forced to borrow from one or other of his two great contemporaries, but, although his rich equipment as an artist made failure in any direction impossible, it is easy to detect in the result that the means employed had not been captured at their source, nor had they been so completely re-fashioned and re-moulded as to take the stamp of his own genius. Even in the best of Raphael's essays in the representation of human drama, the gestures are exposed to the reproach of artifice.

The study of expression no longer bears the seal of absolute sincerity; sometimes it approaches perilously near to forced rhetorical display.

A single example will serve to illustrate the kind of limitation in Raphael's powers I have sought to indicate. *The Entombment* in the Borghese Palace, completed in the year 1507, was preceded by a number of preparatory studies which may be found scattered over the various collections of Europe. There exist, indeed, no less than twenty drawings from his hand exhibiting varying forms of the composition as a whole, or concerned with the separate study of individual groups of figures. It will be seen, therefore, that this great picture, executed when Raphael was only twenty-four years of age, may be taken as the considered embodiment of all the resources at his command; and yet if we compare it with earlier representations of the same subject by men differently gifted, we shall be able to measure precisely in what sense the demands of the theme were foreign to the nature of Raphael's genius.

In the direct expression of the more passionate and dramatic elements of the design, Raphael is easily outstripped both by Giotto and Andrea Mantegna. To the latter, indeed, the design of his painting confesses direct indebtedness, but the tragic feeling that animates Mantegna's rendering lies clearly beyond the power of his greater successor. Raphael could do nothing that was not nearly perfect, and his hand, as it would seem from youth to maturity, was almost incapable of tracing an ungraceful line; and yet for the energy and intensity of expression Mantegna could command, we are forced to accept, in Raphael's painting, a quality that almost borders on artifice.

For the perfect expression of Raphael's genius we must look to the great decorations of the Stanze of the Vatican. It is not too much to say that without a knowledge of these frescoes it is not possible to measure the almost miraculous powers he possessed. Not only in design, but in colour, they far transcend even the most celebrated of his easel pictures; the most perfect of them, the *School of Athens* and the



Anderson Photo.

GROUP FROM THE FRESCO OF THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS, BY RAPHAEL

Vatican, Rome.

Disputa, are perhaps to be reckoned the crowning achievements of the Italian Renaissance. So complete is his command over the essential beauty of life itself, that we willingly forget the particular theme which each separate group is designed to illustrate. The arrest of spontaneous gesture in each individual form, the easy association of figures, every one of which are charged with ideal character, and yet seem so completely absorbed in the simple duties in which they are engaged that the result makes almost the familiar appeal of a painting of *Genre*,—these are elements of perfection over which no painter, before or since, has ever boasted an equal mastery. And to this sense of simplicity, that is never violated, there is added a quality of epic grandeur secured by a means which it is almost impossible to define. These forms of faultless grace move in the larger air that belongs to a world lifted above the world of common experience.

In the ordering of these vast compositions, there is a prevailing sense of masculine virility, unobtruded and yet ever present, that scarcely prepares us for the sense of exquisite tenderness that argues an almost feminine fineness of vision. The majesty and the modesty these matchless designs possess, their command over the most delicate physical truths of gesture and movement, and that unfailing dignity of character that seems never sought and yet is never missed, these may be cited as among the qualities through which Raphael commands the admiration of all time.



Vatican, Rome.

GROUP FROM THE FRESCO OF THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS, BY RAPHAEL

Altart Photo.

VENICE AND THE NORTH

VENICE AND THE NORTH

WITH the decline of the spiritual elements in art which quickly betrayed itself after the death of Michelangelo, the control of the surviving forces of Italian painting passed from Florence to the North. In truth it may be said that the absolute authority of the imagination in the region of the plastic arts did not long survive the divorce of painting from the service of religion. The newer poetic impulse born of the wider outlook of the Renaissance came too late to exercise complete control over the already matured resources of the painter; for, side by side with the enlarged technical resources art had now acquired, there had crept in a growing spirit of convention which gradually impaired, and finally overpowered, that sincerity of poetic vision which had found its first spring in the inspiration supplied by the truths of the Christian faith; on the other hand the innate tendencies of the Venetian school towards the realistic interpretation of nature had already prepared the way for the ultimate triumphs of an art that was differently inspired. How strong these tendencies were, even in the earlier manifestations of painting in Venice, is clearly demonstrated in the fact that the transcendent genius of Giotto left there no strong or lasting impression. Giotto had executed some of his most memorable frescoes in the neighbouring city of Padua, but the spirit that inspired them was almost negligible in its influence among his contemporaries and immediate successors in the schools of the North.

But if the influence of Florence upon Venice in the earlier period of its history was neither deep nor lasting, the ultimate authority of the painters of Venice upon all the later schools of Europe was profound and enduring. The three branches

of painting which, in more modern times, mainly engaged the energies of Flanders, France, and Spain may be said to have had their birth in the city of the Adriatic. The cultivation of the beauties of Landscape as a separate and independent object of study, the development of the art of Portraiture, and the interpretation of the facts of social life which finally resulted in the painting of *Genre*, may be traced back to the initiative and example of the Venetian painters. Each of these separate activities, as we have had occasion to notice, had found tentative expression in the art of Florence, but they had there been subdued to the larger control of imaginative design which, up to the date of the final decline of the School, had supplied the tradition which governed and directed its energies. Even in that earlier period when the subjects presented for pictorial illustration were imposed upon art by the authority of the church, and when, therefore, the industry of every school was employed upon a common task, it is easy to detect the first signs of a divergence of aim and method that ultimately led to the clear assertion of those separate influences which have ever since claimed the allegiance of individual masters and of rival schools; for whereas the theme provided by the sacred legend had found in Florence men endowed in the highest degree with imaginative vision, who brought to the task the church allotted to them a quickened sense of those spiritual realities in the life of Our Lord, the interpretation of the same range of subjects led the painters of Venice to dwell with increasing emphasis upon those external and decorative qualities the study of outward nature suggested to them, until, little by little, these phenomena, which the Florentine summoned as symbols to be employed in the expression of ideas, became to the painter of Venice almost self-sufficing in their independent appeal. In the treatment of the individual face and form the beauty and character in the model gradually overpowered the message it was, at first, chosen to convey. The sense of portraiture, both in human life and in outward nature, encroached in every direction upon the world of abstract ideas, and the closer

study of reality which this tendency evoked and involved brought in its train a freer and larger rendering of the incidents of contemporary life, which, from the first, became a marked feature of Venetian painting even in the region of religious art.

The effect of these tendencies upon the art of painting itself we shall have to trace in greater detail in the later development of the Venetian school. With the advent of the Bellini they were clearly announced; and the efforts of individual painters who preceded them need not, in a general survey such as I am attempting, detain us long. In the work of the earlier painters of the school of Murano there is much that will rightly claim the attention of the student, and in the achievements of the Vivarini and of Carlo Crivelli and his followers there is still more; but in whatever way their claims may be measured, whether in relation to the general development of the painter's art in Italy, or in respect to their contribution to the historic movement of the Venetian school, it is not necessary to dwell at length on the results they accomplished. Antonio Vivarini died in 1470 and Carlo Crivelli's career was completed before the close of the century; and it is only necessary to recall the fact that by this time Fra Angelico, Masaccio, and Filippo Lippi had already long completed their lifework in Florence, and that Botticelli and Ghirlandajo were producing masterpieces that called for no excuse, on the ground of the historic position of their authors, to establish the conclusion that the contemporary products of the school of Venice represented a belated growth and development. It is to an earlier contemporary of Crivelli that we must look for the first clear indication of the main direction of Venetian painting. Jacopo Bellini, father of his two more illustrious sons, was born in the year 1400, and although little of his painted work remains for examination, enough evidence survives in the drawings and sketches from his hand to prove that he may be rightfully regarded as the originator of those tendencies which were destined ultimately to control the development of the Venetian school.

But before tracing the later growth of a tradition of which Jacopo Bellini may be said to have been the founder, it may be well to examine a little more closely the contrasted ideals which the painters of Venice and Florence will be found to illustrate in their work. Speaking generally, it may be said that as we pass from the art of the Tuscan capital to that of the Northern city whose myriad canals are fed by the waters of the Adriatic we are conscious of exchanging an empire of ideas for the overpowering allurements of a living and present world. As the two schools grew to maturity the contrast of invention, of style, and of technical workmanship became absolute and irrevocable: so much so indeed that in the epoch of their full development even the genius of Tintoretto was powerless to reconcile their conflicting aims. Each school had already long ago chosen its own appointed path, and the later record of art in every country of Europe reflects again and again these essential elements of cleavage that were first asserted in Italy in the fifteenth century. This separation indeed rests upon opposing currents in art that are, in their nature, eternal, and it is impossible to arrive at any just understanding or true enjoyment of the beauties of either school until we realise the limitations in the scope and purpose of painting, which are imposed by the acceptance of the particular ideal in the service of which the artist has elected to labour. Indeed, one of the greatest hindrances to the serious student of painting is that arising out of an apparent agreement that only thinly veils an inherent and essential distinction of aim; and the real claims of the work either of Florence or Venice can never be rightly appreciated until we learn to penetrate the elements of external resemblance to those deeper qualities which constitute the true foundation of the victories achieved in the one or the other. A list of the titles of Venetian and Florentine paintings of the fifteenth century would indeed hardly disclose these deep divergencies of the spirit which it is our business to decipher and understand. At the first the professors of both schools are confessedly engaged in the service of religion, as, at a later period, when

the spirit of the time had invaded that larger territory opened by the genius of the Renaissance, both are equally employed upon subjects supplied by the legends of the antique world, or by themes suggested by the imaginative inventions of literature. But when we look beneath the surface, we shall discover that the art of Venice was never in essence religious, and that the art of Florence, in the spirit that inspired it, was never anything else. If, however, the spirit in which the Venetian painters laboured was essentially Pagan, it was not by reason of any direct and deliberate reliance upon the teaching of the antique, but in deference to a profound and unprejudiced attachment to eternal nature. For it was in consequence of this worship of nature that Venice was led more and more to relax its hold upon the central imaginative claims made by the particular subject chosen for illustration, and to pursue, with ever increasing energy, the kind of beauty that did not need the support, or the control, of a definite intellectual conception.

When this truth is once clearly apprehended, we shall readily understand how inevitable was the tendency of the Venetian school towards the discovery and development of those three special branches of painting — Portrait, Landscape, and Genre — of which it may be said to have been the birthplace ; for, in the treatment of the human face and form, when once the yoke of imaginative control is thrown off, an increasing study of the facts of individual life follows as a necessary consequence. It has already been shown in our survey of Florentine painting how, with the advent of a race of men inspired with the spirit of poetic design, the individual features of the human face were subdued again and again to the conditions which served to make it the vehicle for the expression of poetic ideas. In Venice, almost from the first, the tendency was in the exactly opposite direction. Conventions of type and expression, at first imposed by the requirements of the theme, were quickly discarded in favour of a more liberal acceptance of the infinite variations of individual character which nature supplied ; and, in the result, the sense of portraiture gradually

overwhelmed the ideal claims of the particular subject under illustration. This same sense of portraiture rapidly extended its influence to the facts of inanimate nature. The scenes depicted, no longer subordinated to the figures that peopled them, asserted their independent claims to interpretation and, in the freer play of observation thus engendered, Landscape — in the modern sense of the term — took its birth. As a consequence no less inevitable, the closer study of individual humanity led, by a natural process, to the more intimate interpretation of the social phenomena of contemporary life. As the ideal figures in Venetian painting were, in their essence, no more than the portraits of Venetian citizens only superficially subjected to the demands of the poetic design, it followed, without any real violence to the essential aims of the artist, that he should proceed to the interpretation of those social conditions from which these figures had been directly and immediately drawn.

If the closer study of the Venetian masters be found to justify what has been said, it will be accepted as a general characteristic of Venetian painting that its basis was realistic rather than ideal. It has already been said of Florentine art that from its earliest days to the period of its decline it had a story to tell; that the transcendent artistic qualities it had displayed were generated under the pressure of an overmastering imaginative impulse; and that, when later the call of the legend relaxed and lost its hold, the artistic qualities it had summoned for its interpretation suffered a corresponding decline. The contrast between the two schools may therefore be summarised in the statement that Florentine art was, in its essence, narrative art, while the art of Venice, whatever imaginative quality it developed in the hands of individual masters, was by comparison based upon the study of individual characteristics and was an imitative art. It must not, however, be assumed that the great representatives of the school manifest in any less degree than those of Florence the stamp of creative invention. All art that is not primarily concerned with the problems of man's spiritual fortunes must inevitably take the road that,

from the first, was fearlessly trodden by the painters of Venice. But along this path also the imagination seeks and finds its own opportunity of exercise, and how great are the triumphs in the region of mere beauty that await the artist who sets out with the single desire to render faithfully the facts of the world about him may be indicated by a further reference to the achievements in Landscape of the more modern schools which followed in the footsteps of Venice. In the painting of Florence the background of the picture, and all that furnished it, are only treated as contributory forces in the illustration of the theme which the human actors in the composition are engaged to present; in their essence these subordinate elements are no more than so many symbols employed to enforce the significance of the message it is the mission of the painting to convey; and, as a consequence, an endeavour to secure an effect of illusion is strictly restrained or wholly discarded. In the treatment of these same elements by the painters of Venice this subordination to the imperious demands of the legend was never, from the first, so rigid or complete. In their independent appeal they are found gradually to detach themselves from the kind of control that the masters of Florence willingly obey. The pursuit of the particular features of the background assumes an increasing sense of individuality, resulting in a stronger definition of local character both of form and colour, thus corresponding to the developed feeling for portraiture which is found in the treatment of the figures inhabiting the scene.

In these circumstances nature, to whose appeal the Northern artist willingly surrenders himself, supplies its own narrative and its own drama. In the treatment of the human element of the design the biographical interest supplied by the closer study of the individual gradually supplants, and finally overwhelms, the poetic message of the legend chosen for illustration, while, in the rendering of inanimate nature, the constantly shifting empire of the sky upon the settled forms and permanent facts of local colour results in the discovery and manifestation of those subtle gradations of tone which are of the very essence of the modern landscape

painter's art. The signs of this new birth in both spheres of influence are already manifest in the art of the Bellini, and are almost triumphantly asserted in the later work of Giorgione and Titian. We may no longer look for those delicate subtleties of form by means of which Florentine painters used the facts of landscape as an integral part of their composition, contenting themselves with those elemental evolutions of dawn and noon and twilight which left undisturbed those formal qualities of the scene he had judged useful to his design; but, in their place, we have to welcome the advent of that new world of beauty born of the loving observation of the myriad transient changes of sun and cloud.

The far-reaching effects of this larger and more sensitive study of nature need to be fully realised by the student of Venetian painting. Composition, which in Florence had been wholly dominated by design, now yields to a new sense of composition which is mainly inspired and controlled by colour. All the resources of illusion are here freshly summoned to the support of an art that no longer regards the shapes and hues of the external world as merely component parts of a vocabulary placed at the service of the painter for the interpretation of a preconceived imaginative conception. The authority of the artistic sense, without which even the most superlative imitative triumph is but a barren victory, is as clearly present in the work of Venice as in that of Florence, but it is so subtly interwoven in the completed fabric of the painter's achievement as almost to elude and defy separate definition. Venetian painting makes no declaration of its ideal that is communicable by any other means than those supplied by painting itself; and for this reason, of painting considered as a separate and independent craft, the Masters of Venice may justly claim to be the first supreme exponents. They were the founders of that mighty race of the wielders of the brush who have deliberately set themselves to try conclusions with nature, and in this pursuit the presentation of any particular theme, however it might absorb the energies of men differently inspired, became for

them, and those who followed them, a matter of secondary and subordinate importance.

To appreciate these deeply seated tendencies of the Venetian school we must look beyond the completed works in colour by which the genius of individual Masters is best known to the world, to the preparatory sketches and studies made in direct contact with nature. In respect of no other school are these preliminary drawings so significant and important, and once they have been made familiar to the student it becomes no difficult task to recognise in the paintings themselves the growth and development of qualities that otherwise might pass unnoticed. The drawings of the Venetian painters may not possess intrinsically the charm and beauty that belong to the corresponding efforts of the Florentine school, for the sufficient reason that the element of design, which readily found expression in the abstract language of the pencil, was at no time of the same controlling force in the art of the North. But in that particular form of Venetian painting which was concerned with landscape they afford matter of absorbing interest and endless fascination. It is recorded that in an ancient catalogue of Titian's paintings there occurs for the first time mention of a picture that bears no other title than that of *A Landscape*. Among his drawings, on the other hand, are to be found numerous examples, that could bear no other title, being, as they are, wholly concerned with the portraiture of particular scenes in nature entirely divested of any direct human appeal. In very many of them the hills and valleys of Cadore are imaged with loving fidelity and exactitude; and to this region where he first saw the light, he must, as the evidence of his countless drawings proves to us, have returned again and again during the course of his long career with ever increasing delight in its manifold beauties.

And if the sketches of men like Titian and Giorgione are necessary to a full understanding of their work in colour, they are in the case of Jacopo Bellini, whose name has already been cited as that of the originator of the vital and characteristic tendencies of the Venetian school, altogether indis-

pensable ; for of the painted work of Jacopo there is little that survives. It is, therefore, fortunate that we should possess an ample record of his talent in the two sketch books he has left behind him. One of these was acquired by the Louvre in 1884, the other is in the possession of the British Museum. Many interesting problems gather round the studies which are here collected, but the importance of the volumes in regard to the growth of the Venetian School rests upon the fact that here, for the first time, are decisively announced those distinctive ideals which were destined ultimately to control the practice of the greatest of the Venetian Masters.

Jacopo spent some of his earlier years in Florence, and there is clear evidence in the volume before us that the dominating qualities of Florentine design left a strong impress upon the modes of his own invention. In this aspect of his work we may readily trace the source of its influence over Andrea Mantegna, who, as we shall presently see, occupies a distinctive position among the painters of the North by reason of his profound attachment to those qualities of ideal invention which are characteristically Florentine. But what is even more interesting in regard to our present subject of study is the gradual emergence in these sketches of the new feeling for nature that was destined to dominate the art of Venice. There are here a number of drawings which tell of the growing attraction of the facts and incidents of rural life and of an increasing desire to register a living impression of things actually seen. To this class belong the studies of animals and the sketches of peasants engaged in the normal occupations directly springing from the scenes they inhabit which afford evidence of an ever increasing interest in the details of the scenes themselves.

This idyllic element in art, afterwards more fully recognised in the work of Giovanni Bellini, is here first clearly announced ; and decisively differentiates the work of Jacopo Bellini from that of his great son-in-law, Mantegna, where the landscape is, for the most part, austere and barren in character and uninhabited save for the great figure of the central design. In contrast to this undeviating severity of style we may note

in the work of Jacopo and of his gifted son a disposition to rely more and more upon incidents and episodes suggested by the unprejudiced observation of nature without special reference to the demands of the central idea. Instances of this are to be found in the presence of the wood-cutters in the drawing of St. George and the Dragon by Jacopo, and in the peasants in the background of the *Death of Peter Martyr* by Giovanni in the collection of the National Gallery. As a series of memoranda reflecting the ideas and modes of representation characteristic of their author, the contents of both volumes, indeed, are of exceptional interest, bringing us, for the first time, into direct contact with that spirit in Venetian art which induced its professors to surrender themselves to the captivating beauties the external world offered for interpretation.

But before following the separate achievements of the younger Bellini, which belong to the main current of Venetian painting, we must pause to consider more closely the career of Andrea Mantegna as it affected the work of his contemporaries. In the attempt to appreciate and distinguish the separate ideals that attracted the allegiance of the painters of the fifteenth century, it is perhaps more illuminating and instructive than that of any artist of the time. In native gifts employed upon some of the most interesting problems which art presents, Mantegna is one of the most commanding figures in the history of the Italian Renaissance, for there is here combined in the person of a single individual a full acknowledgement and expression of those conflicting ideals which are destined to re-appear in nearly every epoch in the after development of painting. At the core of his genius Mantegna unquestionably claims kinship with the great Masters of Florence, and he pursued, with a devotion no Florentine can rival or surpass, that patient study of the antique that was an inevitable accompaniment of the newly awakened research of beauty in form. The imaginative quality of his mind, constantly inspiring and directing the work of his hand, sets him no less clearly in close alliance with those great masters of the South who looked to art as being



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Louvre, Paris.

THE MADONNA OF THE VICTORY, BY ANDREA MANTEGNA

pre-eminently a vehicle for the rendering of the spiritual truths of humanity. But, side by side with these dominating features of his genius, there is to be recognised a sense of uncompromising realism which served as a foundation of the more characteristic conquests of the Venetian school. The perfect fusion of these differing, and sometimes conflicting tendencies, even a genius so great as that of Mantegna was not destined to accomplish, and it is by reason of the inevitable incompleteness of his attainment that his career remains so instructive as reflecting with indomitable power independent and yet sometimes confluent streams of artistic development. Before all things a draftsman, he reflects in his determined loyalty to nature a kind of realism that goes deeper than that which Venice was seeking, bringing his art at this point directly into touch with that of his great contemporary of the North, Albert Dürer. Dürer himself must have recognised their essential kinship, for, when he came to Italy and was on his way to Mantua to visit Mantegna, the news of the great Paduan's death for ever afterwards remained in his memory as the saddest thing that had ever befallen him.

The power and the scope of Mantegna's genius on his imaginative side is, perhaps, best illustrated in his drawings and engravings, and if we were to select a single example in decisive vindication of his overwhelming claims as an artist, it would be enough to single out the great drawing of *Judith and Holofernes* in the Uffizi at Florence. Here, in a fortunate moment of faultless inspiration, the great forces at his command unite for a perfect result. In feeling it touches the highest point of tragic intensity, and while the claims of nature are neither ignored nor evaded they are combined with a classic beauty of form and design that, perhaps, nowhere else in his work is so completely achieved. His command over the secrets of passion is clearly expressed in the contrasted expression of the two actors in the drama ; the face of Judith eloquent of the conflicting thoughts that follow action effectively contrasted with the stolid countenance of the attendant. The deed the great heroine has been summoned



Alinari Photo.

Uffizi, Florence.

JUDITH WITH THE HEAD OF HOLOFERNES, BY ANDREA MANTEGNA

to accomplish is finished, and the nervous energy of heroic limbs is partly relaxed, but the fingers still close around the sword-hilt and the hand that held the severed head lingers over its last office as though uncertain as to whether it has parted with its dread burden or no.

There are others among the drawings of Mantegna that assert with almost equal power his command of the higher qualities of imaginative design; and the engraving of *The Entombment*, for which several preparatory studies exist, may be specially singled out for study. The form which his vehement grasp of the tragic realities of the theme gives to the scene became a model which those who came after him were unable to ignore, and the student will find in Raphael's interpretation of the same subject material for the most interesting and instructive comparison of the genius of the two men.

These principles of design, the direct outcome of profound imaginative vision, though most clearly announced in his drawings, are enduringly characteristic of the whole of his work in painting; and it is, therefore, interesting to consider what were the sources of inspiration which chiefly appealed to him in the period of his apprenticeship. It was almost as a child that he entered Squarcione's workshop in Padua, and the research of the kind of beauty the surviving examples of antique sculpture provided, which stamps the work of Squarcione himself and of his less gifted pupils, with qualities that were archaeological rather than artistic, left to the last an ineffaceable impression upon Mantegna. But we must look beyond the teaching of his first master for the source of those deeper impulses Mantegna acknowledged. Speaking broadly, they are threefold. I have already drawn attention to the fact that the great frescoes of Giotto in the Arena Chapel in Padua left little mark upon his contemporaries or immediate followers in the neighbouring city of Venice, but, in the nature of things, they must have exercised an overwhelming influence upon the youthful Mantegna, and we can picture to ourselves with what quickened sympathy, due to the direction of his own native



Anderson Photo.

Church of the Eremitani, Padua.

ST. JAMES BEFORE HEROD-AGRIPPA, BY ANDREA MANTEGNA

gifts, he must have gazed upon the work of the great Florentine. As I have already pointed out, there is no obvious dependence upon classical form in the work of Giotto, and where he approached most closely to the spirit of the antique, the alliance was effected by qualities that lay inherent in his own processes of invention which drew him naturally to that final simplicity of utterance that belongs to the great sculpture of the past. But, apart from the inspiring work of Giotto, Mantegna encountered in the Padua of his day another influence that must have had for him an irresistible appeal. Mantegna was born in 1431 ; when little more than ten years old, he had entered the workshop of Squarcione, and, in 1444, Donatello arrived in Padua and commenced the execution of a series of works in bronze that grew into being at a time when the youthful Mantegna must have been readily accessible to the spirit they so powerfully expressed. There were in fact many points of fundamental resemblance between these two men, for both acknowledged the authority of the antique, and yet in both this worship of the past was combined with an almost vehement attachment to nature that saved them from the facile acceptance of an ideal of beauty that had not been indicated by direct reference to reality. Hence we may find in the work of both, even when the result approaches most nearly to mastery, a note that tells of a struggle between contending forces that was not yet complete.

On that side of his genius that drew him towards the direct imitation of nature Mantegna's work undoubtedly confesses the authority of Jacopo Bellini, who was the immediate begetter of this naturalistic tendency which determined the later practices of the Venetian school. Jacopo seems to have sojourned in Padua after he quitted Florence in 1425, and in 1453 Mantegna was wedded to his daughter. It lies beyond the limited scope of my task to enter in any detail into the many complex problems which affect the artistic relationship between Mantegna and his brother-in-law, Giovanni Bellini. Those who are able to appreciate at their true value the distinguishing qualities of these two

gifted painters will, I think, arrive at the conclusion, that in all that concerns imaginative invention and qualities of design that are the direct outcome of such invention Mantegna had nothing to learn from Giovanni, and that where we find in respect to these qualities a close resemblance between their work the originating spirit may be safely ascribed to Mantegna. So clear indeed was Mantegna's supremacy in this regard that for a while it served to keep in check the dominating tendencies of the Venetian school. For a while only: for the surrender of the spirit of Venetian painting to the sensuous allurements of outward nature was too deeply planted to be long arrested. It was a growing tide which the influence of no individual, however gifted, could divert or stem, and it is not wonderful, therefore, that Mantegna, in his own later work in colour, should have shown himself to be partly swayed by those forces that were destined to subjugate nearly all the leading spirits of Venice.

One field wherein Venetian influence is clearly marked in Mantegna's work is that of portraiture, and this side of his genius can hardly be appreciated by those who have not visited the somewhat forlorn and isolated city of Mantua, where Mantegna passed so large a part of his life. There is no greater contrast in the recorded development of Italian art than that which is offered to the traveller to Mantua who passes from the old Castello, with its painted frescoes by Mantegna, to the neighbouring Palazzo del The, where the grandiose invention of Giulio Romano marks the ruinous decline of Florentine painting in the age of its overthrow.

Ludovico Gonzaga, Lord of Mantua, had long sought the services of Mantegna, but it was not until 1463 that the Paduan artist accepted his importunate invitations. His frescoes, which still decorate the walls of the Castello, reveal to us little of the Mantegna, the author of the great drawing of Judith, but mark an extraordinary development in his powers as a painter of portrait, and are, for that reason, profoundly interesting as reflecting one characteristic aspect of his artistic individuality. These portrait groups which dec-

orate the walls of the Castello afford in their main features scarcely a hint of those great qualities in the region of poetic design of which Mantegna had already proved himself the possessor. In the sedate dignity of their appeal no less than in their searching fidelity to individual character they would seem to anticipate some of the characteristics that were afterwards exhibited by Holbein. So exclusively concerned does their author appear to be in the presentation of the several figures of his great patrons, that, as we gaze upon them, it is sometimes hard to believe that the same hand and mind, here content with an almost unconsidered grouping of the personalities included in his composition, had already shown himself a master in the widely different realm of poetic and passionate invention. But during his sojourn at Mantua these larger attributes of his genius, lying dormant for a while, were only waiting fuller opportunity for their exercise. Even before his journey to Rome, whither he was summoned at the bidding of the Pope in 1486, he had commenced that great series of descriptive compositions undertaken in illustration of the Triumph of Cæsar, and it was immediately after his return to Mantua in 1491 that he executed the great drawing of Judith already noticed, and the *Mars, Diana, and Venus*, in the British Muesum. It was owing to the taste and discernment of Charles I that the Julius Cæsar series of paintings found their way to England, but it was not until the reign of George III that they were subjected to a process of disastrous restoration at the hands of Louis Laguerre. It is impossible to overstate the damage that was then wrought upon these superb illustrations of Mantegna's genius, and yet, despite the cruel injury they have suffered, enough still survives to vindicate the nobility and power displayed by their inventor.

This brief survey of Mantegna's career does not affect to do justice to his commanding genius. It may, however, suggest the measure of his influence upon those painters of Venice with whom he was directly associated, while it affords at the same time an indication of the degree in which the characteristic impulses of the Venetian school affected the

growth and development of Mantegna's own individuality. In the region of design his authority remained for a while undeniable, while in the field of portraiture, which his own native gifts led him to explore with indomitable energy, the truths of individual character, his art confessed a firm alliance with ideals, that were destined to receive their full development in the later history of Venetian painting. But there was one element in his art that never revealed any trace of the newly awakened spirit of Venice. Mantegna's landscape, grim, austere, and barren, was never quickened by that newer feeling for the sensuous beauty of the outward world that is already clearly affirmed in the work of his brother-in-law Giovanni Bellini; nor was there that added richness of colour born of the more willing surrender of art to the allurements of nature. Mantegna's claims as a colourist, even at their highest, were, in essence, identical with those put forward by the Florentine school, where colouring was directly governed and controlled by design. There is, I think, only one of his pictures, *The Death of the Virgin*, in the Prado Gallery at Madrid, where he has allowed himself to be content with the direct transcript of one of the scenes upon which he must have gazed day after day during his sojourn at Mantua. The view of the inland Lagoon which forms the background of this picture is, in fact, a simple study of the landscape that confronted him as he gazed from the Castello; but who shall say from what desert world he drew material for that stern, inhospitable land which springs into being as an unfailing accompaniment of his ideal designs?

In sharp contrast to the essential characteristics of Mantegna's genius stand those qualities in painting that were initiated by the Bellini. I cited the work of Jacopo as registering the first manifestation of qualities that were rapidly developed in the work of his two gifted sons. In the paintings of Gentile and his brother, Giovanni, we get the clear assertion of tendencies that were afterwards destined to take separate shape in the three cognate branches of painting recognised under the categories of Landscape,

Portrait, and Genre. In their work also is to be recognised the first tentative effort towards certain triumphs in the region of colour that were unknown to the painters of the South. It is impossible to appreciate any one of these tendencies as a thing of separate growth: their relation to one another, their dependence upon one another, is radical and organic. Colour, as pursued by the Venetian school, became a feature in painting that was the direct outcome of a profound revolution in the ideal outlook of the painter; and although it may be held to be the quality most clearly distinguishing the triumphs of the Venetian school, it can hardly be understood without a somewhat deeper study of the special aims and particular purposes which called it into exercise. The overwhelming inclination of the painters of Venice towards the study of individual phenomena, whether animate or inanimate, which gradually overtook and finally almost submerged the ideal claims of the subject,—even though, to the end, those claims were formally acknowledged,—is a cardinal fact the student has to recognise in any intelligent appreciation of Venetian painting. This truth once clearly apprehended, whatever else presents itself for analysis is, by comparison, easy of comprehension. The gradual ascendancy of colour over design as a controlling force in the creative processes of the painter is not difficult to follow or to understand. The divergent achievements of the two schools of Florence and Venice, produced in obedience to purposes distinct, and in some sense opposed, can then be judged in their right relation; and it will be recognised, as I have already pointed out, that such divergencies must occur again and again in the history of art, as this distinction is re-asserted by individual genius.

The temperate spirit of Bellini exhibits scarce a trace of conflict as his art passes from the ideals imposed upon his earlier practice by the authority of Mantegna to that new worship of nature, wherein the allurements of colour gradually encroach upon the stricter domain of design. An unfailing urbanity was indeed the mark of Bellini's painting at almost every period of his career. His rendering of the religious

spirit, if never intense, was always touchingly human: his soul dwelling contentedly upon the simpler and sweeter aspects of life, sought no access to those deeper problems which stirred the great painters of Florence from Giotto to Michelangelo; and yet his finest compositions preserve a sedate dignity of formal beauty that was due to the tradition established by Florence as it was transmitted to the North through the genius of Mantegna.

Despite its tranquil appeal, however, the work of Gian Bellini embodies and expresses the progress of a revolution both in style and practice that was destined to establish the distinctive characteristics of the Venetian School. His genius may be said to be the direct precursor of that of Giorgione and Titian. Before his career came to its close, he had triumphantly asserted those qualities which remained during its history most deeply indicative of the tendencies of Northern art. Under the influence of his brother-in-law Mantegna, he embodied so much as his particular temperament could assimilate of the great tradition of Florentine style; and there is a moment in the youth of both when their separate achievements are hardly distinguishable. The two pictures of *Christ's Agony in the Garden*, now in our own National Gallery, aptly illustrate how nearly they stood to one another at this particular period. The original composition, of which each of these two designs is a characteristic variant, may be traced to the sketch-book of Jacopo Bellini. But the dominating qualities are those which remained with Mantegna to the close of his career, whereas in the case of Bellini they gradually gave place to a style that bears the impress of his own independent individuality. But although on the side of invention the genius of Mantegna was infinitely the stronger and more authoritative, there is a certain tendency in the art of the great Paduan which links it naturally with the progressive development of the Venetian school. As I have already pointed out, the sense of portraiture lay at the root of all Venetian painting — a sense of portraiture which asserted itself equally not only in the rendering of human phenomena,



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

DOGE LEONARDO LOREDANO, BY GIOVANNI BELLINI

but of the facts of the inanimate world. This same sense of portraiture is no less an integral part of the genius of Mantegna. There are throughout the whole of his strenuous career the signs of constant conflict between the ideal claims of the chosen subject and the individual appeal of the separate characters chosen for its presentation, an appeal that finds full play in the series of frescoes that decorate the Castello at Mantua, where the personages of the Gonzaga family are reproduced with an unflinching fidelity that even Holbein himself could scarcely surpass.

Bellini's picture of the *Agony in the Garden* is ascribed to the year 1456, and for some time after that date the ascendancy of Mantegna's genius may be traced in the work of his brother-in-law. Indeed there are few great painters in whom the complete assertion of native individuality was so long deferred as in the case of Bellini. Raphael may indeed be cited as an instance of individual power breaking gently and gradually from the influence of his master; but Raphael was only thirty-seven when his marvellous career was brought to a close, while Bellini was already forty-four years of age when he produced the great picture of the *Virgin with Saints* for the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, which was destroyed by fire in the year 1877. This work may be accepted as the first clear expression of Bellini's genius, though it was not until the year 1486, when he repeated the same subject in a picture which now hangs in the Venice Academy, that we may concede to him the full possession of his great resources as a painter. In the following year he painted the *Virgin and Child*, the picture by which, perhaps, he is best known to his modern admirers, and it was at this date that Giorgione and Titian entered his studio. Not, therefore, till he was nearing sixty years of age may we recognise that absolute sense of mastery in his art which gives to him his legitimate place as the true founder of the Venetian school. All his later work reveals only a natural and inevitable development of the victory here decisively won: a development which may be said to reach its fullest utterance in a third rendering of the same subject in the

Church of San Zaccaria, executed in the year 1505. It was about this time that Albrecht Dürer visited Venice, and if we turn to the great German's *Crucifixion* in the Dresden Gallery, we may see that he, too, felt the spell of Bellini's genius.

If we carefully study the picture in San Zaccaria, it will not be difficult to realise what were the essential ingredients of Bellini's great contribution to the development of Italian painting, and what were the sources from which he drew his inspiration for the mighty task he accomplished. The supreme gift which Venice conferred upon art lay in the region of colour, and what colour meant to the Venetians is here, for the first time, completely expressed. Never before in any Italian painting had colour been subjected to the full domination of the effects of light and shade, and never, therefore, had the painter been able to present that depth and richness of quality that is dependent upon the artist's power to follow the local tint through infinite gradations of tone. In reaching to so great a result, Bellini had been profoundly assisted by the mastery he had patiently acquired over the secrets of the new oil-medium. It is not necessary here to enter into the many vexed questions as to the means by which the use of this medium, first discovered in Flanders, had been brought to the South. Whether Antonello da Messina had himself journeyed northward, or was dependent upon his knowledge of the Flemish practice by the importation of Flemish painting into Sicily and Naples, matters little. We know at least that Antonello was at Venice about the year 1472, and we know for certain that from that date onward the technical problems which the discovery imported from the North aroused, had been pursued with unceasing patience and persistence by Bellini and other members of the Venetian school. Technically, therefore, Bellini was perfectly equipped for dealing with the difficulties of interpretation the new study of nature involved, but his eager acceptance of the enlarged resources the richer vehicle afforded, had its spring in the desire to perfect an ideal that was engendered by that new outlook on nature that decisively



Anderson Photo.

Church of San Zaccaria, Venice.

VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH SAINTS, BY GIOVANNI BELLINI

separates the art of Venice from the achievements of the South.

The sense of portraiture, as I have already pointed out, lay at the root of all that was distinctive in the work of the Venetian school. But this quality of portraiture, if it is to be taken as a true index of the Venetian ideal, must be understood in its largest and widest sense. In so far as it animated all Venetian painting, it led to the absorbing study of the facts of individual human life for their own sake, as opposed to the employment of such facts for the purpose of interpreting a preconceived idea. As we follow the story of the Venetian School, we shall have to note the gradually increasing claims of the individual in all that concerns the human element in painting. There is, indeed, no lack of individuality in the faces and forms of the personages introduced into their design by the painters of Florence; but in Florence every individual feature is informed by the artist's imaginative feeling for the subject that dominates every part of his picture. The human face and form had there been so profoundly explored that they became at last finely attuned instruments that stood apt and ready for the utterance of ideal conceptions. The individual countenance, gradually subdued by the poetic impulse under which the great painters of Florence laboured, became charged with ideal character that not only mirrored each fleeting mood of feeling, but reflected through types carefully chosen and refined the depths of man's passionate experience in his tragic fortunes or in the uplifted longings of his spirit.

The sense of elemental drama that is thus conveyed by the painter transcends the demands of the particular theme, and images that deeper and wider struggle that is inseparable from life itself. Freighted with this larger message, these Florentine faces nevertheless remain alert with a vivid individuality that clearly marks them off from more vague and empty abstractions. The types employed by Giotto and Botticelli, by Leonardo and Michelangelo, and equally by Raphael himself, make an appeal to the imagination that is distinguishable from the appeal of mere portraiture

and is, nevertheless, stamped with a kind of individuality deeper and more significant than mere portraiture can command. In Venice, on the other hand, as the great masters of the school pursued and enlarged its particular tendencies, the process of development was in an opposite direction. There, as the art advanced, although the painter's formal allegiance to the chosen subject still survives, it is easy to note his growing attachment to the particular features and the individual characteristics of the various personalities introduced.

This governing tendency in the art of the Venetians is abundantly illustrated in the domain of portraiture strictly so called. Florence, indeed, had produced many perfect examples in this branch of painting, but they bear everywhere the impress of a style that had been fashioned by men whose main purpose consisted in the expression of imaginative ideas. In Venice, for the first time, we get the clear recognition of portraiture as a separate and independent branch of art, and of portraiture so considered Giovanni Bellini may be reckoned the founder. The head of *The Doge Loredano* in the National Gallery is a capital instance of his powers in this direction. This little picture we may assume to have been executed in the opening years of the sixteenth century, for Loredano was not appointed to his office till the year 1501. But Giovanni Bellini had been elected as official painter in the Hall of the Council at Venice in 1479, and we know that it became a part of the duty of his office to introduce a likeness of each successive Doge into the frieze that ran round the chamber. Another example of this official series of portraits survives in the effigy of Giovanni Mocenigo, now preserved in the Correr Museum at Venice. But, indeed, there is no need to confine our view to portraits avowedly so called in order to realise how persistently the art of Bellini reflected this tendency in Venetian painting. If we take only the three pictures to which reference has already been made, each in its different way illustrating the subject of the *Virgin and Child with Saints*, we shall be struck at once with the rapidly increasing

inclination of the painter to concede individual character to the persons he introduces into his composition. Traces of an earlier tradition which is content with the acceptance of conventional types still linger in the first of this series, the altar-piece destroyed by fire in the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo; a stronger impress of separate individuality is clearly perceptible in the masterpiece at the Venice Academy; and the movement here clearly established is still more completely asserted in the great picture of San Zaccaria.

And what was true of the human element in painting became equally true in regard to the facts of the inanimate world that surrounds them. The discovery of landscape as an independent subject of study was essentially a Venetian discovery. In Florence and Umbria, landscape had indeed played a noble part in the design, but it was always clearly subordinated to the imaginative purpose that sought expression mainly through the facts of the human face and form. In Venice, on the contrary, it tended more and more to assume an independent position; and if, in our study of Venetian pictures, we turn from the figures who inhabit the scene to the scene itself, we shall see that a corresponding sense of portraiture distinguishes the interpretation of the facts to the external world. In order to realise in a manner at once striking and convincing the essential distinction in this particular of the two schools, let the student contrast the background in Leonardo da Vinci's *Vierge aux Rochers* with the landscape that surrounds Titian's *Virgin and Saint Catherine* in the National Gallery. In the first we have the features of an invented world, rendered with absolute precision and certainty, but clearly summoned into being to serve and enforce the spiritual message of the composition: while in the second the careless and unfettered freedom of nature supplies in itself an element of attraction that bears no direct reference to the theme under illustration.

From another point of view, the sense of portraiture in landscape, initiated by Bellini and pursued with increasing insistence by Giorgione and Titian, becomes of the deepest significance in our study of the triumphs of Venetian paint-

ing. We cannot too often remind ourselves that certain new, and as yet unexplored, qualities of colour constitute the central and the most enduring contribution made by Venice to the painter's art, and it, therefore, becomes a subject of absorbing interest to trace these larger discoveries in the region of colour to their source in the chosen ideals of the school. It is, I think, hardly too much to say that they are derived directly from that new and direct observation of the world about us which is involved in the study of landscape. The exquisite subtleties of form that mark the highest achievements of the Florentine school were evolved, as we have seen, from the concentrated attention which the great Florentine masters bestowed upon the truths supplied by the human figure and the human countenance. And they could indeed have been derived from no other source; for those beauties of form, which are at once the most profound and the most elusive, are dependent upon the interpretation of all the myriad movements of the body as they mirror and reflect the inner movements of the mind. It was this ever changing sense of vitality that the art of Florence sought to register, and the undeviating attachment of its greatest masters to the secrets of the spirit was the dominating factor by means of which they secured an unapproachable delicacy in the delineation of physical form and movement that has never since been surpassed, has never indeed been equalled, in the history of painting. But that new wealth of beauty in colour which is the characteristic conquest of Venice is directly associated with a new study of external nature that lay clearly beyond the scope of Florentine painting. In the sense in which colour was understood by the great masters of the North, landscape is the parent source. There is no brilliancy of individual tint in which Venice can claim supremacy over Florence or over Flanders. In that jewel-like quality which it was their sole ambition to attain, painters like Fra Angelico, Van Eyck, and Memling still stand unrivalled. But in the colouring of Venice there was added to this gem-like brilliancy a new beauty that was born of the vitalising agency of light and shade as they strike

into infinite variety the original value of each chosen hue; and this new beauty was directly generated by the observation of the changing moods of weather as they affect and transform the resident facts of landscape.

It was here, therefore, that the fundamental impulse towards portraiture proved so powerful a factor in the victories achieved by Venice. As we pass from the central figures in any one of the compositions of Bellini and his successors to the scenes in which they are disposed, we find that here, too, the claims of individual character begin to assert themselves. A sense of definite locality in the background is seen to correspond with the growing individuality of the human actors in the composition: and not only of definite locality, but of chosen phases in the ever-changing empire of the sky. The landscape takes new and independent existence as it emerges into being under the shifting influence of tone, and the impersonal drama of outward nature takes its place as an integral part of the composition of the picture.

It may be interesting in this connection to note how constant in the history of painting has been the association of portrait and landscape. The discoveries in colour effected by Rembrandt and Rubens are clearly and closely dependent upon their feeling for outward nature. The same association is announced in the practice of Velasquez and not less decisively in the brilliant achievements in colour of our own Gainsborough. It may, indeed, be broadly said that nearly every fresh triumph in the region of colour which the later history of painting has evolved is to be traced to newly observed realities of tone which nature offers to the individual vision of the artist who is prepared for their reception. It is little wonder, then, that the naturalistic tendencies of the painting of Venice serve to make the tradition established by its great masters a surviving force in all the later schools of Europe. An art that was so closely linked with the emotional and intellectual activities of humanity as that of Florence was fated to share the maladies of the spirit it sought to interpret. The painting of Venice,

on the other hand, with its different and, in some sense, more limited outlook, was secure against those elements of decay that Florence with its far-reaching ambitions was powerless to escape. It is for this reason that painting considered as a separate craft may be said to have had its birth on the Adriatic, where the artists' more intimate dependence upon the external realities of nature served in a measure to keep it free from vicissitudes inseparable from ideals of painting that are more closely linked with the inner life of the spirit.

When we have realised the commanding position occupied by Giovanni Bellini in the origin and evolution of the Venetian school, we shall the better be able to appreciate the value of the work of his less-gifted associates. In their different degrees they give expression to those several tendencies of the Venetian school to which Bellini gave full and masterly expression. Chief amongst them stand Cima da Conegliano, whose work is specially interesting as evidence of the growing feeling for landscape which Bellini had initiated. In common with Titian and Giorgione, Cima loved to introduce scenes of natural beauty that had surrounded him in childhood, and in this way he gave emphasis to the growing feeling for local truth which became so striking a feature in the landscape painting of the Venetian School. The same tendency reappears in the work of Basaiti, but neither here nor in the painting of Previtali is there any essential quality of colour or design that is not better expressed by Bellini himself.

It needed the genius of Giorgione and Titian to demonstrate to what great issues the teaching of Bellini was tending. Both these great painters were country-bred, and although they came to Bellini's studio in Venice when they were still in their boyhood, both brought with them a strong and abiding love of the scenes which had surrounded them in their childhood. And while it may be said that their joint influence upon the newly born art of the landscape painter was prodigious, their work in this respect possessed in each case a separate and pronounced individuality. The art of Giorgione had a distinctively lyrical character, and

he employed the facts of landscape in some sense as a Florentine might have employed them, as notes in a considered harmony that had its source in personal emotion. Giorgione may indeed be regarded as the inventor of Idyllic Art, of that art wherein human feeling and emotion is in its essence inseparable from those incidents of natural beauty which enchain and surround it, and where both assist the expression of a mood of feeling which closely suggests the analogy of music.

Giorgione and Titian, according to their separate and in some sense divergent ideals, may be said to have carried to a triumphant conclusion the tradition established by Giovanni Bellini. If the year 1477 be accepted as the date of Giorgione's birth, he was no more than thirty-four years of age when he died. Raphael, his younger contemporary, died nine years later at an age scarcely greater than that attained by the master of the North, and they, therefore, may be cited together as two men of genius who, in the brief span of life allotted to them, have left the most profound impression upon the history of painting. But they differ in this respect, that whereas the output of Raphael was prodigious in quantity in view of the time occupied in its production, the accredited works of Giorgione, as they survive to us after the sifting and discriminating processes of modern criticism, are comparatively few in number. After making all allowance for his work in fresco that has been lost to us, his career still remains unique as that of a painter whose undying fame rests upon the evidence of an achievement not only strictly limited in actual amount, but no less definitely circumscribed in respect of the ideal it pursued and expressed. On the technical side of his art he stands in the mid-stream of Venetian painting, linking the career of Bellini with that of Titian and of Tintoretto. But as a creator of individual genius, he may be said to hold an independent position not merely in the Venetian school, but in the history of the Italian Renaissance. This distinctive place which the judgment of time has accorded him is, I think, mainly due to that strongly lyrical quality which

until his advent had nowhere found expression in the plastic arts. In his apprehension of a certain kind of sensuous beauty, at once subdued and sublimated by the control of certain moods of feeling that have a spiritual origin, Giorgione stands out clearly and pre-eminently as the poet-painter of the North. The study of his career, however, becomes in this sense the study of an isolated temperament. And yet, although his native personality clearly marks him off from his fellows, he fitly finds his place in the Venetian school by reason of his subtle and sensitive employment of those secrets of colour and tone which it was the peculiar mission of Venice to explore and reveal.

The quality of his imagination belonged no less decisively to the environment which the spirit of Venetian painting supplied. It was far enough removed from that penetration into the deeper problems of the spirit which characterises the great imaginative masters of Florence. Character in this sense counts for little in the enchanted vision of Giorgione, and there is in no single one of the faces he has portrayed any reflex of the burden of passionate experience which is imaged for us in the work of Leonardo or Michelangelo. His nature shunned as by instinct all definite conceptions that appeal to men differently inspired, seeking rather that special beauty that dwells in moods of feeling that are directly responsive to the tranquil spirit that seems to dwell in Nature itself. Occasionally, indeed, his treatment of landscape reflects that more dramatic quality of changing weather, that was destined afterwards to be pursued to such triumphant results by Titian, and this is especially noticeable in the picture of *The Tempest* in the Giovanelli Palace at Venice. But such occasional experiments only served to indicate more decisively his constant preference for that quality of serenity in landscape which more fitly accords with his chosen interpretation of human character. For it is to be noted that Giorgione at all times gave only the most limited expression to movement and action in the human figure. His genius seemed to impose a sense of stillness upon the human actors in the scene

as upon the scene itself. His vision conducts us into an ideal world, which images only the repose that follows action — a world ruled by a sense of quietude that just



Anderson Photo.

Palazzo Giovanelli, Venice.

THE TEMPEST, BY GIORGIONE

faintly echoes those activities it has banished and subdued. In such scenes, as they are depicted by Giorgione, the heavy air grows palpable as it encircles in a golden veil the forms

it imprisons and reveals — forms richly clothed or forms ungarmented, associated in a fashion that suggests the fantastic logic of a dream. If we take *The Concert* of the Louvre, which gives characteristic expression to this aspect of Giorgione's invention, despite the pervading sense of stillness which comes as the final note the painter seeks to sound, the scene seems still musical as with the whispered echoes of a concluded melody. Across the distant landscape to the fountain that stands beneath the overshadowing trees, there float the bewitching notes of those "ditties of no tones" that are more haunting to the spirit than the recorded strains of even the sweetest melody.

These supreme qualities of Giorgione's art, so perfectly expressed in *The Concert* of the Louvre, are no less so in the exquisite altar-piece at Castelfranco, as well as in the picture of *The Three Philosophers* at Vienna and in the *Venus* of the Dresden Gallery. But where he seeks to illustrate a theme of direct dramatic significance, as in the *Trial of Moses* and the *Judgment of Solomon* in the Uffizi at Florence, he betrays, so far as the treatment of the human figure is concerned, a comparative failure of resource. In both of these pictures, indeed, the perfect beauty of the tranquil landscape background in which the drama is set seems strangely discordant with the painter's uncertain and faltering grip of the narrative claims of the legend.

The art of Giorgione does not readily lend itself to the process of detailed critical analysis. It resides so securely within the confines of the medium in which it is embodied that it seems to reject and elude precise intellectual definition. In the school to which he belongs, Giorgione holds a place apart in virtue of that lyrical quality which pervades and controls the exercise of his imagination. The work of no other Venetian painter carries so strong an impress of individual personality and of individual temperament, and even though we summon for comparison the great imaginative achievements of Florence, his distinctive place remains wholly unassailed. The art of Botticelli, to take only a single instance, reflects no less clearly and decisively the

personality of its creator. But while the Florentine seeks to realise a definite poetical conception, the spirit of Giorgione resides contentedly within the confines of a sensuous impression which does not seek articulate utterance: himself, as we know, a cultivated musician as well as a painter, he strives to render by means of a visual representation those moods of feeling which it is the final mission of music to express.

It is scarcely wonderful that the fascinating qualities of the genius of Giorgione should have cast their spell over the youthful Titian. Though they laboured side by side in the workshop of Giovanni Bellini, it would seem now to be fairly well established that Giorgione was the elder by several years, and in the impressionable season of early manhood even a slight superiority in age counts for much. It is certainly, however, remarkable in Titian's case that the influence exerted by his elder contemporary should have endured for so long a period, and should have postponed to a comparatively late date in his career the first assertion of those qualities that were destined to form the foundation to his ultimate triumphs as a painter. If we accept even the latest of the dates that have been suggested for Titian's birth, he was already a man of thirty when he began the execution of the series of "Bacchanal" pictures for the Duke Alphonso, and it is to these pictures we must look for the first decisive declaration of his ideals as a painter. Of the chronological order in which the work of his earlier period was produced there is no trustworthy record, but we may fairly assume that those of his paintings which betray the influence of Giorgione's example belong to this time. Chief among these is the *Sacred and Profane Love* in the Borghese Gallery at Rome, assigned to the year 1512; *The Three Ages of Life* at Bridgewater House; *The Concert* of the Pitti Palace, that so long bore the name of the master of Castelfranco.

But to appreciate the essential qualities of Titian's art, and to measure the wealth of his contribution to the enduring glories of the Venetian school, we must concentrate our

attention upon the varied work of his hand produced during the twenty years that elapsed between 1520 and 1540.



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Hampton Court Palace.

ALESSANDRO DE' MEDICI, BY TITIAN

Shortly before the commencement of this golden age in Titian's career, he had entered into relations with Alfonso I, Duke of Ferrara, and it was for the decoration of his

patron's palace that he painted several of those masterpieces that are most enduringly associated with his fame. The picture that may be said to constitute a connecting link between the spirit that inspired the art of Giorgione and the freer expression of his own individuality is *The Three Ages* of Bridgewater House, where we may note on the alternate sides of the composition the final record of his allegiance to the master of Castelfranco, and the first assertion of his own feeling for movement and gesture in the group dominated by the infant Cupid on the right of the composition. Something of the same newly born spirit of dramatic expression is to be found in *The Concert* of the Pitti Palace: a picture that was long accepted without question as the work of Giorgione. At the beginning of the period under consideration, we have the *Bacchus and Ariadne* now in the National Gallery; *The Bacchanal* and the *Worship of Venus* of Madrid; while to the closing years of the period may be assigned the *Vierge au Lapin* of the Louvre and the *Virgin and St. Catherine* of our own National Gallery. To varying intermediate dates belong the *Assumption of the Virgin*, now in the Academy at Venice; the great picture of *The Entombment*, in the Louvre; the lost canvas of the *Death of Peter Martyr*, which formerly stood in the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice; the *Pesaro Madonna*, in the Church of the Friary, and the well-known composition of the *Presentation of the Virgin*, in the Venice Academy.

There are certain common qualities which belong to all these works—qualities of colour and qualities of design—that had not yet found expression in the Venetian school. Perhaps the most noticeable feature that runs through them depends upon the increasing study of the truths of energetic gesture and movement, that even the greatest of his predecessors had almost entirely ignored. It remains a matter for wonder, considering their intimate relation, that the great achievements in this direction registered by the genius of Mantegna should have left so little trace in the art of Giovanni Bellini. When we recall the almost turbulent invention of Mantegna's drawing of *The Entomb-*



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

THE VIRGIN WITH THE RABBIT, BY TITIAN
The Louvre, Paris.

ment, and the kindred qualities exhibited, although with greater restraint, in the great series of cartoons illustrating the triumph of Cæsar, it serves as an added proof of Bellini's entire self-possession in his constant adherence to a chosen ideal, that from the beginning of his career to its close he should deliberately have renounced all effort to rival the great victories of his kinsman in this direction. An even greater reserve in the representation of energetic movement is not indeed to be wondered at in the case of Giorgione, who, as we have already pointed out, deliberately subdued those more dramatic elements in obedience to that lyrical quality that dominated his design. But Titian, who in virtue of native gift differed so essentially from both, must have been quick to seize upon the example the great Paduan master afforded him. Once his spirit was liberated from the thrall-dom imposed upon him by Giorgione, he exhibited during the whole of his long career an ever increasing persistence in the study of the problems of action and drama. And yet the resources he developed with such mastery in this field were not in essence identical with those that belonged to Mantegna. His command of drama never deeply coloured the individual characters employed in its utterance. Gesture and movement with him were never firmly linked with spiritual experience; they served rather to interpret the physical realities of action than to penetrate the emotional truths which underlie and inspire it, and for that reason inevitably tend to a kind of expression that may be described as declamatory and rhetorical. Perhaps for this very reason Titian's mode of invention has become the accepted model of nearly all modern painters who have sought to illustrate life in the romantic spirit of which he was the first great exponent. In Venice itself he became the direct forerunner of Tintoretto, and his influence may be traced through Rubens and Van Dyck down even to the threshold of our own time, when the romantic spirit once more asserted itself under the leadership of Gericault and Delacroix.

This increasing externalism in the rendering of human drama is closely associated in Venice, and most of all in Titian,



Louvre, Paris.

THE ENTOMBMENT, BY TITIAN

Altinart Photo.

as the supreme exponent of the Venetian ideal, with the vivid study of the beauties of outward Nature which found expression in landscape. In his hands and in the hands of those who followed him, the background became a factor in the composition of almost equal importance with the figures it enshrines. The varying moods of Nature, as may be noted especially in the later work of Tintoretto, are employed to reflect and enhance the emotional message of the subject, and although in Titian's hands its uses in this regard were rarely given a full measure of development, the facts of landscape are constantly employed by him to emphasise that sense of movement which was of the very essence of his art. But there is another aspect under which the gradual emergence of the feeling for outward Nature may be regarded as of the utmost interest and importance in the development of the Venetian school. If, as may be rightly maintained, the chief glory of Venetian painting resides in its colour, and if the supreme place as a colourist is, as indeed it must be, conceded to Titian, the triumphs he achieved in this field may most surely be ascribed as mainly due to that love of outward Nature which came to him as his birth-right. The magical influence of light on colour, breaking a single tint into myriad variations of tone, must have been a secret already implanted in Titian's breast in those earlier days when as a child he had watched the fleeting clouds speeding over the hills and valleys of Cadore. It was in the mountains guarding his birthplace that he quarried those hitherto undiscovered jewel-tints which he afterwards cut into a thousand facets in his workshop at Venice. He was the greatest and the most subtle of Venetian colourists, because he was the first to exhibit and to record those infinite variations of tone that the constant facts of Nature owe to the ever present dominion of the sky. And with this secret once in his grasp, he was able to achieve, in the treatment of human flesh and in the rendering of the material and texture of the garments of his sitters, a kind of subtlety and refinement that had not even been attempted by those who had preceded him.

The extent and value of Titian's great contribution to the landscape painter's art can only be rightly measured when we bring into account his numerous studies and drawings which are exclusively concerned with the interpretation of the beauties of Nature. Here, too, in the earlier stages of his career we may note the influence of Bellini's teaching, and in the Albertina Gallery at Vienna there is a landscape study by the latter, showing that even in methods of execution Titian followed closely upon the heels of his master. But what is still more interesting in any careful survey of these numerous landscape drawings by Titian is the evidence they afford of a changing method of interpretation that almost precisely corresponds to his enlarged vision of the possibilities of landscape as interpreted through the medium of colour. In the drawings that may be surely assigned to the earlier period of his career, there is as yet scarcely any trace of that endeavour to register the truths of aerial effect that becomes characteristic of his work at a later time. His essays at first are marked by a reverent and painstaking determination to register all the facts that Nature presented to him with a searching precision that partly recalls the work of Albrecht Dürer in the same field. But gradually this concentration on minute realities of every detail of the scene gives place to a larger and freer suggestion of the general impression it leaves on the mind of the artist. And this general impression, as the student will readily observe, comes of an increasing enjoyment of those fleeting realities born of the newly born feeling for the changing influence of sun and cloud, of which Titian was the first powerful exponent. Technically, these earlier studies are suggestive of the exact methods of the engraver, whereas in later life Titian is more apt to employ those sweeping and continuous lines that indicate the unfettered handling of a master of colour who is using the pen to suggest and register certain impressions that colour alone can fully express.

Bearing in mind these two governing impulses that inspire Titian's painting,—his research of the possibilities of physical movement and gesture, and his constant pursuit

of aerial movement as revealed in his ever increasing mastery over the beauties of landscape,— we may turn to almost any one of the masterpieces produced during this central period of his career as affording full justification for the high place assigned to him in the history of painting. But if the judgment of a later time were forced to base his claims upon the evidence of only a single performance, I think his fame might still rest secure against every assault if he had left no other work of his hand than the *Bacchus and Ariadne* in our own National Gallery. It is not merely that in regard to the spiritual qualities of his art Titian's genius betrayed a keener sympathy for subjects drawn from classical legend. In themes provided by religion he at no time manifested the kind of insight that his predecessor Bellini could command. But, apart from this consideration, the *Bacchus and Ariadne* sums up with singular completeness all that is greatest in his command of colour, and all that is most inspiring in his rendering of action. Figures and landscape alike here bear witness to the full mastery of his resources, while, in the management of the composition, we have to acknowledge the full victory of that tendency in Venetian painting wherein the balance and opposition of rich masses of colour begin to supplant the authority of linear design.

Among the contemporaries of Titian in the schools of Northern Italy the most interesting figure as illustrating the opposing ideals of the schools of Venice and Florence, and the separate tendencies of style which the full acceptance of the one or the other directly involved, is that of Sebastian del Piombo. Painters like Palma Vecchio and Pordenone, Moretto and Moroni, whatever the beauty of the work from their hand, exhibit scarce a trace of that distracted ambition which besets the labours of Sebastian del Piombo at every stage of his career. Palma, indeed, frankly surrenders himself to the authority and teaching of the great Venetian master. In essence his work showed but little of imaginative intensity, nor was it coloured by any deeper feeling for religious sentiment than that which inspired Titian himself. His preference for a rather heavily



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE, BY TITIAN

developed and ample type of female beauty partly concealed the inherent limitations of his powers as a draftsman. And even with the most generous appreciation of such qualities of invention as he possessed, it must be allowed that the charm of his painting lay in those attributes of tone and colour that Titian's initiative had placed at the disposal of his followers. Pordenone's talent owned a more virile character, and his control of gesture and action prove that he appreciated at their true value the discoveries in this field which Titian had initiated and developed. In the eclectic spirit he sometimes displayed, Pordenone partly anticipated the larger experiments of Sebastian: but his work at no time exhibited any deep insight into the profound problems of design which the latter was ever seeking to master. Their complete solution escaped even the persistent efforts of Michelangelo's most eminent disciple; and the failure was not so much due to any imperfect resource on the part of the individual, as to certain insuperable difficulties that were in their nature inseparable from the task he sought to accomplish.

In Venice pictorial art was animated by tendencies that were hostile to the solution he was seeking. Here we find that the more uninspired the characters introduced the more vehement becomes the gesture and the more emphatic the attempt to record those movements that are expressive of only a passing mood of passion. Sebastian del Piombo (1485-1547) had entered upon his career as a painter under the influence of Giorgione, who may be assumed to have been at least ten years his senior. At the outset he had been designed by his father for the career of a musician, and as Giorgione's skill with the lute is well known, it may have been that their common love of music first brought them together. All that is certainly known is that they worked side by side in the studio of Giovanni Bellini, and that Sebastian's earlier efforts dating from that time betray clearly the ascendancy of Giorgione's genius. But when he was only twenty-five years of age, Sebastian found a powerful patron in Agostino Chigi, a man of much influence at the

Papal Court, who tempted the young painter to quit Venice and take up his residence in Rome.

It is this visit to Rome and the determining influence it exerted upon his practice as a painter that renders the career of Sebastian so instructive in the light it throws upon the contrasted ideals of Venice and Florence. Titian also paid a visit to the Eternal City, but that was at a time when his own individuality had already been decisively declared — an individuality which, once liberated from the spell of Giorgione's genius, was too strong and independent to be greatly affected by external example. But Sebastian was still at an impressionable age when he was brought into contact with Michelangelo and Raphael, and it is no matter for wonder that the varying phases of the work he executed during his sojourn at Rome should alternately betray the influence of both. At the first he definitely ranged himself as a disciple of Michelangelo, but there is ample evidence, more particularly in the portraits he executed at this time, that he was also irresistibly attracted by the more urbane spirit of Raphael. At the same time he retained traces in his painting of the manner of the great Venetians which, in the season of his youth, he had acquired from the example of the master of Castelfranco.

Sebastian's career, therefore, is peculiarly interesting as representing the only serious endeavour made by any painter of commanding abilities to unite and fuse the diverse qualities of the schools of Venice and Florence. Tintoretto indeed at a later time — if we may trust his biographer, Ridolfi — inscribed over the door of his workshop a legend which, if it had little influence upon his own practice, has at any rate resulted in later times in a vast amount of false and futile criticism. To combine the design of Michelangelo with the colouring of Titian may indeed have been the dream of his youth, but he was at any rate saved by the strength of his own individuality from making any serious attempt to give practical shape to his ambition. Sebastian's inferior gifts afforded no such protection against this hazardous endeavour, and, in view of the great technical qualities he brought to

his self-imposed task, it becomes specially interesting to consider what were the sources of his failure. For it must be conceded by any careful student of his work that it bears throughout the whole of his career clear evidence of a thwarted purpose. Broadly speaking, it may be said that the task he essayed was in its essence impossible of accomplishment. No man, however greatly endowed, could hope to associate ideals that, in their developed expression, were not only divergent, but in some sense antagonistic. The triumphs of Titian's colouring had been gained only by the deliberate sacrifice of certain qualities which were of the very life of Florentine design, while, on the other hand, Michelangelo's transcendent power over ideal character and expression,—a power ultimately resting upon the subtle and sensitive employment of line that was alien to the Venetian genius,—by the very completeness of the victory he achieved, was compelled to renounce those magical allurements of realistic colour that lay at the disposal of the Venetian masters.

But even if the task has been in its nature possible, Sebastian del Piombo was not rightly equipped for the adventure. He who would take over the larger dialect that has been moulded by the lips of genius must himself possess genius scarcely inferior to that of the master he worships; and the greater his native gift the more humble will be his attitude, the more patient the means he will adopt in his endeavour to follow in the footsteps of his teacher. Imitation is a process inseparable from all artistic development and is always most freely employed by those who are most greatly endowed. But imitation, when it is employed by genius, implies a process or re-conquest. The beauty that it is sought to take over is then tried and tested by renewed reference to those truths in nature from which it took its birth, and when that process is completed,—however loyal the faith of the pupil in the sufficing beauty of the message delivered by his master,—that message takes in the re-telling a new and individual accent.

Of this process of re-conquest Sebastian was incapable.



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS, BY SEBASTIAN DEL PIOMBO

If we look to the varying phases of his work produced after his journey to Rome, whether they show the authority of Raphael or of Michelangelo, they exhibit a common failure in the individual spirit that would make them worthy successors of the work of either. What is lacking, even in his most ambitious essays in design, is the impress of any recognisable individuality of his own sufficiently powerful to enable him truly to assimilate the qualities he sought to reproduce. In the two great compositions which may be held to present the full measure of his accomplishment — *The Pietà* of the Hermitage and *The Raising of Lazarus*, in our own National Gallery — his accepted model is confessedly Michelangelo. For the latter indeed the great Florentine is said to have supplied some of the preparatory drawings, and yet from the result, despite the painter's laboured acceptance of his master's principles of design, the magic spell, as it is conveyed by any single figure from the ceiling of the Sistine, has wholly fled.

The kind of failure to which these works of Sebastian give such imposing expression recurs again and again in the history of every art. They are the more pathetic because often, as in his case, they call into play talents of almost the highest order, with technical resources that seem apt and ready for the noblest achievement and that are only misdirected in their use by a radical misapprehension of the essential quality of every art and by the constantly repeated illusion of historic progress that has tempted to their downfall certain ambitious spirits in every epoch.

The last great name inscribed upon the roll of Venetian painters is that of Tintoretto. And it is in Venice alone that his genius can be truly measured. Although many of his portraits and a certain number of his subject compositions are to be found in the private collections and the public galleries of other capitals of Europe, we must go to the city of his birth for the full record of his career. Here, indeed, the material for judgment is varied and complete. Even though we wander no further than the Church of the Santa Maria dell' Orto, the School of San Rocco, the Ducal Palace,

and the walls of the Academy, the collected achievement in illustration of the scope and direction of his genius is such as no other painter of the Renaissance can boast. The unceasing energy of his career, the prodigality of his invention, and the phenomenal rapidity with which he gave form and substance to the hurrying images that thronged his brain and clamoured for utterance, leave him with scarcely a rival in the whole history of painting. Rubens, who, in certain essential qualities of invention, shows a marked affinity with Tintoretto, is in some sense also his rival in fertility of production, but although Rubens was a persistent student of Italian painting, his pronounced and obstinate individuality left him wholly inaccessible to those higher attributes of style which in the work of Tintoretto linger on in graceful association with the more urgent claims of the romantic spirit that was destined to dominate his genius.

Little need be said as to the sources of Tintoretto's artistic training and education. All the collected glories of the Venetian school lay spread at his feet, and he availed himself of them all. His critics and biographers have wrangled over the measure of his indebtedness to Titian as though it would somehow add some cubits to his artistic stature if his independence of the greatest master of Venetian painting could be clearly established. The painter himself would most certainly have rejected with scorn any such insecure foundation for the pedestal upon which his admirers desire to place him. The vulgar worship of 'originality' had not yet so far poisoned the wells of art even in that later hour that claims Tintoretto for its supreme representative; and it must be abundantly clear to every student of his work that he at once and eagerly possessed himself of the enlarged resources of pictorial expression which Titian had been the first to place at the service of his fellows and successors.

We have already seen that Titian's individual contribution to the painter's art lay mainly in two directions: an increasing power in the rendering of physical movement resulting in a corresponding dependence upon gesture that is sometimes declamatory and rhetorical, and the opening of a

new world of beauty in the region of colour that was the direct outcome of his feeling for outward nature as it was revealed in the study of landscape under the changing influences of sunlight and shadow.

In both these fields which Titian had been the first to explore, Tintoretto followed his master with feverish enthusiasm, and in both his own individuality enabled him still further to enlarge the rich inheritance he had received. In fertility and intensity of dramatic invention he is manifestly the superior not only of Titian, but of every other representative of the Venetian school, and he is further distinguished as being the first to employ the truths of light and shade as dominating factors in the expression of the emotional realities of his chosen subject. In this sense he stands out as the founder of the romantic spirit in historical painting, — of the spirit that makes the surroundings which outward nature supplies a rival force with the human actors in the scene in the presentation of the dramatic situation. Under the influence of this spirit drama tends to assume more and more a scenic character; it becomes animated by a more determined endeavour to re-create a vision of the incident as it may be supposed to have occurred with all its striking contrasts of accumulated details. As compared with his master, Tintoretto's grip upon individual character visibly relaxes, and the faces he depicts tend more and more to lose ideal significance. But, on the other hand, the scenic appeal of the composition, in so far as it strives to register a single impression, grows in intensity. We feel sometimes in gazing at one of his more turbulent compositions that we are listening to the hurried narrative of an eye-witness; the painter seems to wield his brush as though he held the pen of an inspired reporter able to record with full impartiality and with unflagging vigour all those sharp contrasts of conflicting circumstance that assist the impression of absolute illusion.

And yet, despite the absence of that deeper vision that marks the highest order of dramatic invention and which was indeed beyond the reach even of the most gifted of Venetian painters, there is a certain epic grandeur in Tintoretto's



Anderson Photo.

THE CRUCIFIXION, BY TINTORETTO

School of S. Rocco, Venice.

rhetorical compositions that can escape no student of his work. Even in the most restless of his designs, such for instance as *The Last Supper* in San Giorgio Maggiore or *The Crucifixion* in the Scuola di San Rocco, we are made to feel that the action has been transported into a larger world than that which our common experience makes known to us. By deliberate intention the painter would still seem to make only for a purely scenic presentment of his subject, but the design, as it shapes itself, is conceived on heroic lines by one whose uplifted vision has found its own means of access to an ideal kingdom. At other times, when the demands of the particular theme do not tempt the painter to exuberant action, this epical quality of his art assumes a more complete command, and there is one picture of his where the gesture and action of a single figure serve to endow the whole composition with unwonted dignity. I refer to the great canvas of *The Presentation of the Virgin* in Santa Maria dell' Orto. There is no rhetoric, no seeking for dramatic display, in the beautiful figure of a woman who, with outstretched arm, points out to the child at her side the little form of the Virgin that is outlined against the sky; and yet there is no single form in any of his more crowded canvases which reveals at the same time so noble a sense of design and so magical a power of endowing simple and spontaneous action with some nameless quality of poetical significance.

Despite the pronounced dramatic force of Tintoretto's more ambitious compositions there is one notable limitation that he shares with Titian, and indeed with almost every master of the Venetian school. It is a common characteristic of them all that character as interpreted by the human countenance remains strangely unconcerned amidst the signs of movement and animation that mark the composition as a whole. Nothing is more striking than the contrast between the restless activity of the limbs and the almost sinister indifference that is imaged in the faces of the actors. Ruskin, who was conscious of this limitation in the powers of Tintoretto as an illustrator, seeks to account for it in the particular instance of the *Massacre of the Innocents* by the

suggestion that the painter deliberately abandons all effort at facial expression because he knew that any endeavour in that direction "could only end in ugly falsehood." The painter, therefore, denies himself — as his critic naïvely confesses — "all aid from the features," feeling — as he adds — that "in the midst of that maddened multitude there can be no time allowed for watching expression." There might possibly be some force in the plea if the reticence Mr. Ruskin praises betrayed itself only in this single instance, but it is, in fact, a well-marked feature of the painter's work in every subject that he treated and at all stages of his career. Everywhere it will be found that the face which, with painters differently gifted, stands as the final index of the subtler truths of character and passion, is for Tintoretto almost inarticulate. Nothing could be more securely detached from the poignant emotions the subject would seem to suggest than the countenance of the principal figure of *The Woman taken in Adultery*, at the Academy. Or, if we turn to the procession of stately Venetian beauties who do duty for the virgins of Saint Ursula, is it possible to discover even in the most beautiful of their faces any link that would ideally connect them with the mission upon which they are engaged? In such a picture as the *Adam and Eve* of the Academy the inadequacy of the characterisation becomes almost ludicrous; and even amidst the tumult of *The Crucifixion* in San Rocco or *The Last Supper* in San Giorgio Maggiore, despite the unfailing impress of dramatic vitality that belongs to the presentation as a whole, the fire of invention would seem to be almost extinguished before it reaches even the most important of the individual actors employed. Turn, for instance, to the group at the foot of the Cross in *The Crucifixion*: it is not merely that the faces do not reveal with any power the expected emotion, but that they are devoid of the kind of character that would fitly sort with such emotion. The types employed are not such as could ever be made the appropriate instruments for the conveyance of ideal passion.

In essence this defect is characteristic of all Venetian



Anderson Photo.

Church of the Madonna della Salute, Venice.

MARRIAGE OF CANA, BY TINTORETTO

painting and rests finally upon that overmastering impulse towards portraiture that survives in its most ambitious essays in imaginative design. It only asserts itself more emphatically in the case of Tintoretto because it is there associated with powers of dramatic invention that lay far beyond the reach of any other member of his school. But the drama over which he owned control is in essence the drama of external circumstances seeking utterance in vehement gesture and leaving almost untouched those deeper spiritual realities over which the great Florentines held command. If we contrast the actors employed by Tintoretto with any one of the single figures imaged by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine, we shall begin to understand wherein lies the eternal distinction between the divergent ideals of the two schools. Many of these figures of the great Florentine are only engaged in the discharge of some simple physical duty, and yet in the spontaneous movement of heroic limbs, no less than in the faces that are charged with the tragic destinies of human life, there is the impress of that elemental human drama which underlies and outlasts the demands of any particular legend.

In this endeavour to distinguish the particular quality of Tintoretto's genius there is no thought of undervaluing his extraordinary powers. His sense of drama, according to its accepted ideal, was so far reaching and complete that at the touch of his magician's wand the world itself becomes suddenly transformed into a vast theatre where all the forces of Nature are pressed into his service: light and darkness, sunshine and cloud ranging themselves as the obedient instruments of his invention side by side with the human actors who yield themselves to the tyranny of his genius. And, although these human actors remain in essence mere puppets who move at the bidding of their creator, the declamatory vehemence of their action aptly responds to the spirit of passionate invention in the great creator who compels their service.

The sense of drama in painting as it was conceived and developed by Tintoretto retained its authority over the later



Anderson Photo.

THE LAST SUPPER, BY TINTORETTO

Troveso, Venice.

schools of Europe in the centuries that were to follow. Mr. Ruskin ascribes the survival of the influence of the Venetian masters to the fact that the school of Venice was the "last believing school of Italy," that in short it endured as an example to later generations because of its persistent adherence to the truths of the Christian faith. Nothing could be more profoundly untrue. It was, on the contrary, the essential detachment of Venetian art from all the deeper problems of the spirit, human or divine, that left Venice still a vital force when the poet painters of Florence had lost that spiritual conviction which was of the very essence of their great achievements. It is this fact which renders all endeavours to set the claims of Michelangelo and Tintoretto in direct competition so entirely futile and misleading.

In the effort to discriminate between Tintoretto's great qualities as an illustrator — qualities that in their kind have never been surpassed in the whole history of painting — and the irrelevant claims put forward by the more injudicious among his admirers, there has been no attempt to measure his superb technical resources in regard to colour. Here again he not only appropriated and enlarged the means his predecessors set at his disposal, but became, by the very nature of his task, an innovator and a discoverer of the first rank. It is very noticeable in any careful survey of his work that it reflects two alternative moods as a colourist which belong not so much to successive stages of his development as to the nature of the subjects upon which he was engaged. The contrasted appeal made by these separate moods would indeed seem to have been renewed at recurrent intervals during nearly the whole of his career. The four classical compositions in the Doges' Palace which, for beauty in chosen type of form as well as for the ordered arrangement of composition, are assigned to the year 1578, when he was already sixty years of age, yet in some essential respects exhibit a close affinity with the great picture of *The Presentation of the Virgin* already noticed, which Ridolfi ascribes to a much earlier date. Here, no less than in other examples that might be cited, Tintoretto exhibits a compara-



S. Maria dell'Orto, Venice.

Anderson Photo.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN, BY TINTORETTO

tive tranquillity in the spirit of his invention, duly reflected in the formal beauty of the design, as well as distinctive qualities in the positive scheme of colour employed which are in sharp contrast with the widely different effects introduced into the illustration of his more dramatic themes. It was in the latter that he so greatly developed those effects of chiaroscuro whereon the attention of the Venetian painters had from an early time been engaged. But, if we look to the manifestations of the secrets of light and shade as they had been initiated by Gian Bellini, or even as they were further explored under the pressure of the successive ideals of Giorgione and Titian, we shall be only the more greatly impressed with the extent of the independent contribution that was made by Tintoretto. For the last word in the use of light and shade as an instrument of pictorial expression we must await the advent of Rembrandt; but Tintoretto went further than any painter in Italy in forging out of the truths of light and shade an instrument for the interpretation of the spiritual realities of his subject. Leonardo da Vinci had indeed probed these problems of chiaroscuro, in so far as they were appropriate to an art that was governed by the principles of formal design, and his researches had involved some sacrifice of that gem-like quality of colour that stands among the glories of the Florentine school. In the hands of Tintoretto, who inherited that mastery over the subtleties of tone achieved by Titian, no such absolute sacrifice of the brilliant hues of the colourist was involved. And yet if we compare the kind of effect secured in the greatest of his dramatic compositions with the effect with which Titian remained content in such a masterpiece as *The Bacchus and Ariadne* we shall have to recognise a certain inevitable loss involved in the larger ambitions of Titian's illustrious disciple. Against that loss, however, may be set a new power of rhythmical composition wherein opposing masses of light and shade, that are almost musical in their response, succeed and replace the stricter patterns of design that satisfied his predecessors in the Venetian school.

THE EVOLUTION OF GENRE PAINTING IN VENICE

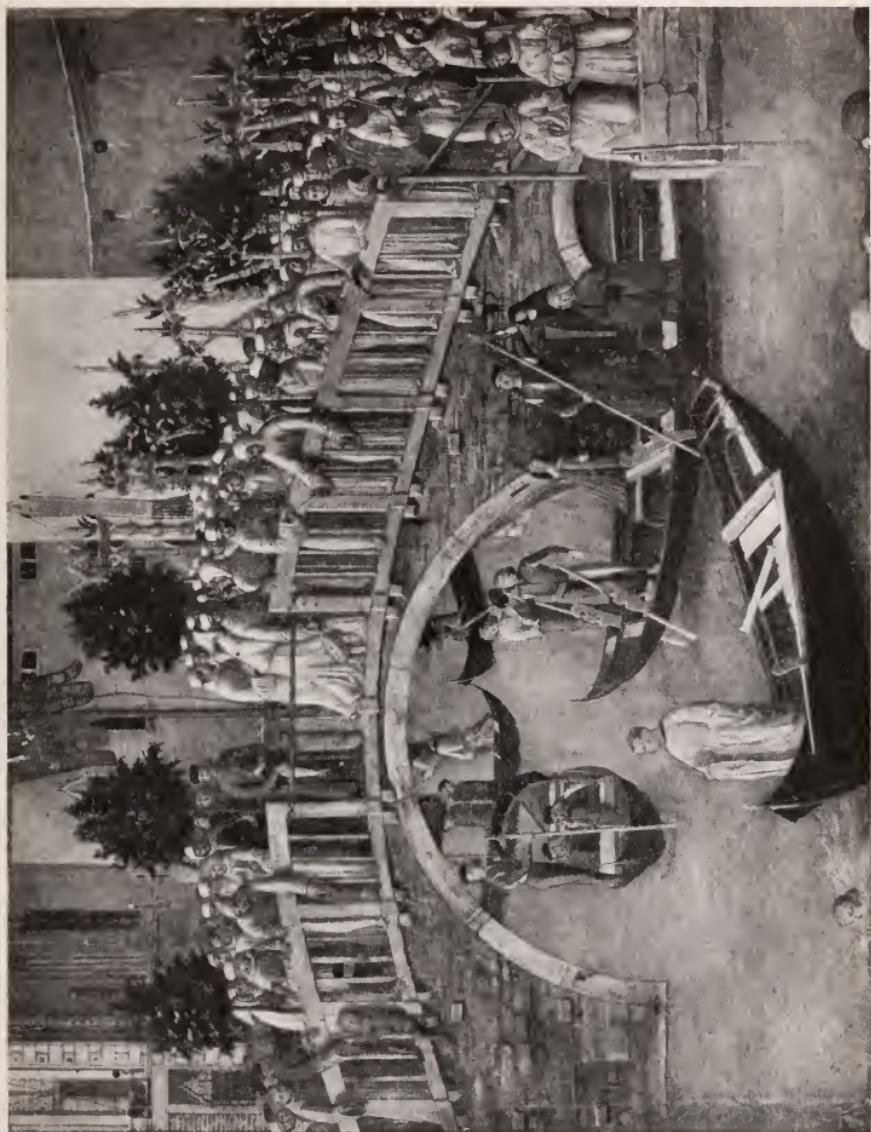
WE must now return to an earlier period, in order to trace the growth of a branch of painting that sought with increasing attention to register the intimate social phenomena in the life of its time. The sketch-books of Jacopo Bellini afford some evidence of tentative experiments in this particular direction, but his vision as a student of contemporary manners went no further than the occasional introduction of incidents of rural life into the backgrounds of his figure compositions. This awakened interest in the rustic life of the country is carried a step further in some of the paintings of his son Giovanni; and in the drawings of Giorgione, Titian, and Campagnola, it is associated with an ever increasing sense of portraiture in the details of the landscape itself. Nearly a century later we have the complete expression of this Idyllic spirit in the work of Jacopo Bassano, who frankly devotes himself to a full and varied rendering of the humbler phases of social life, as they are illustrated in the daily occupations of the peasantry amongst whom he dwelt and laboured.

But the first important development of the Genre painters' art in Venice concerned itself with the civic life of its people. To this day the climate of Venice draws its citizens into the open air, and those more intimate social relations which in northern latitudes can only be studied within the walls of a dwelling are here freely exhibited on the sunlit quays that fringe and connect its myriad canals. It is, therefore, not wonderful that Genre painting in Venice never at any period penetrated the interior of the home. That particular branch of the art at first lightly touched by the earlier masters of Flanders, and notably by Jan Van

Eyck, was left to be completely explored by the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century. The same social instinct that animates the painting of Jan Steen, Vermeer, and De Hooch is nevertheless already at work in Venice of the fifteenth century, and it is to Gentile Bellini that we must look for its earliest expression. Gentile's first important achievement, his decorations for the great organ doors of San Marco, shows him at this time to have been as completely dominated by the genius of Mantegna as was his more gifted brother when he painted *Christ's Agony in the Garden*. His feeling for portraiture, however, was even at this time more strongly marked than was the case with Giovanni, as may be seen by reference to the Tempera picture of *The Apotheosis of the First Patriarch of Venice, Lorenzo Giustiniani*.

In 1479, at the invitation of Sultan Mehemet, Gentile was sent by the Doge of Venice on a mission to Constantinople, and this event marks the beginning of his career as a student of contemporary manners. There are drawings from his hand at this time which bear witness to his careful observation of Eastern character and Eastern costume, and the sympathy they evince for the social realities of a present world finds further and fuller expression in the three great pictures that wholly absorbed his energies in the closing years of the century. The *Procession of the Miracle of the Cross* marks an epoch in Venetian painting, not merely in technical achievement, but as evidence of the growing faith of its professors in the artistic value of the facts of contemporary life, and of the material circumstances of its environment.

Among the followers of Gentile who were eager to enter this new world his genius had opened for study, Vittore Carpaccio is the most eminent and the most gifted. His artistic outlook, indeed, was marked by a far wider range of vision than that of his master. The beautiful picture of *The Presentation in the Temple*, which now hangs in the Academy of Venice, a work that would be priceless if it contained nothing but the figure of the playing angel seated



Academy, Venice.

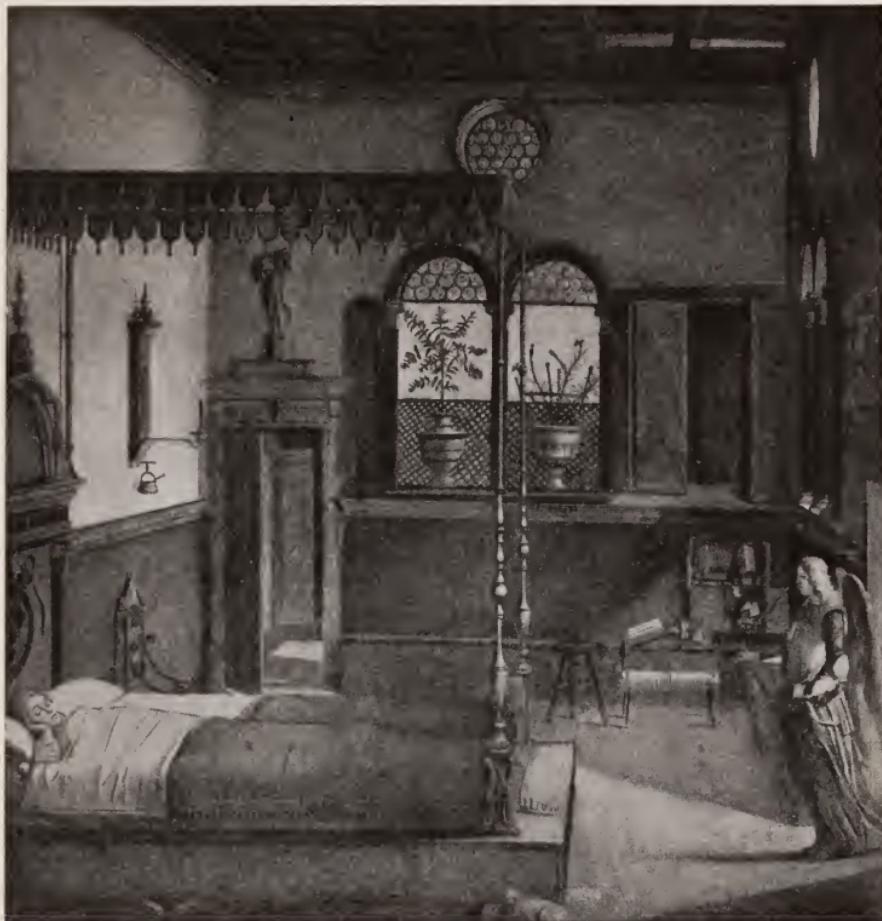
Anderson Photo.

THE MIRACLE OF THE CROSS (Portion of the Composition), BY GENTILE BELLINI

at the base of the composition, shows that Carpaccio, even at that late period of his life, retained full command of those features of great decorative art of which Giovanni Bellini was the acknowledged master. The quality that chiefly distinguishes Carpaccio from his teacher Gentile was his constant feeling for the narrative claims of the legend he had undertaken to illustrate. He was, indeed, a born story-teller, as is triumphantly established by the series of designs illustrating the legend of Saint Ursula: but the main interest of his work in the present connection rests upon the evidence it affords of his keen observation of the life of Venice.

The study and observation of contemporary manners as it passed into the hands of Carpaccio assumed at once a more intimate and familiar character. The art of Gentile Bellini preserved throughout his career something of the austere dignity that properly belongs to the painter of history. Carpaccio, with a livelier fancy and a quickened feeling for the minor incidents of the fable he is called upon to interpret, surrenders himself more readily to the lighter movements of social life. He also worked under the impulse of a kind of poetic fancy, to which his master had no access. The whole of the Saint Ursula series shows Carpaccio to have been endowed with a romantic temperament that gladly liberated itself from the stricter obligations that govern the painter of history, in order to follow without restraint the course of a legend that allows full play for the exercise of a fertile invention. Apart, however, from the illustrative power which these pictures display, they are particularly interesting in regard to our present subject of study in the incidental evidence they afford of Carpaccio's wide and minute observation of the facts of the social life of his own time. In the canvas that depicts *The Introduction of the Ambassadors to King Marus*, which in all respects may be reckoned as perhaps the most successful of the series, our attention is constantly drawn away from the principal incident, in order to note the ease and skill with which the painter registers the facts that presented them-

selves to him in the everyday life of Venice. Particularly interesting in this respect are some of the episodes depicted in the scenes which form the background of the composition.

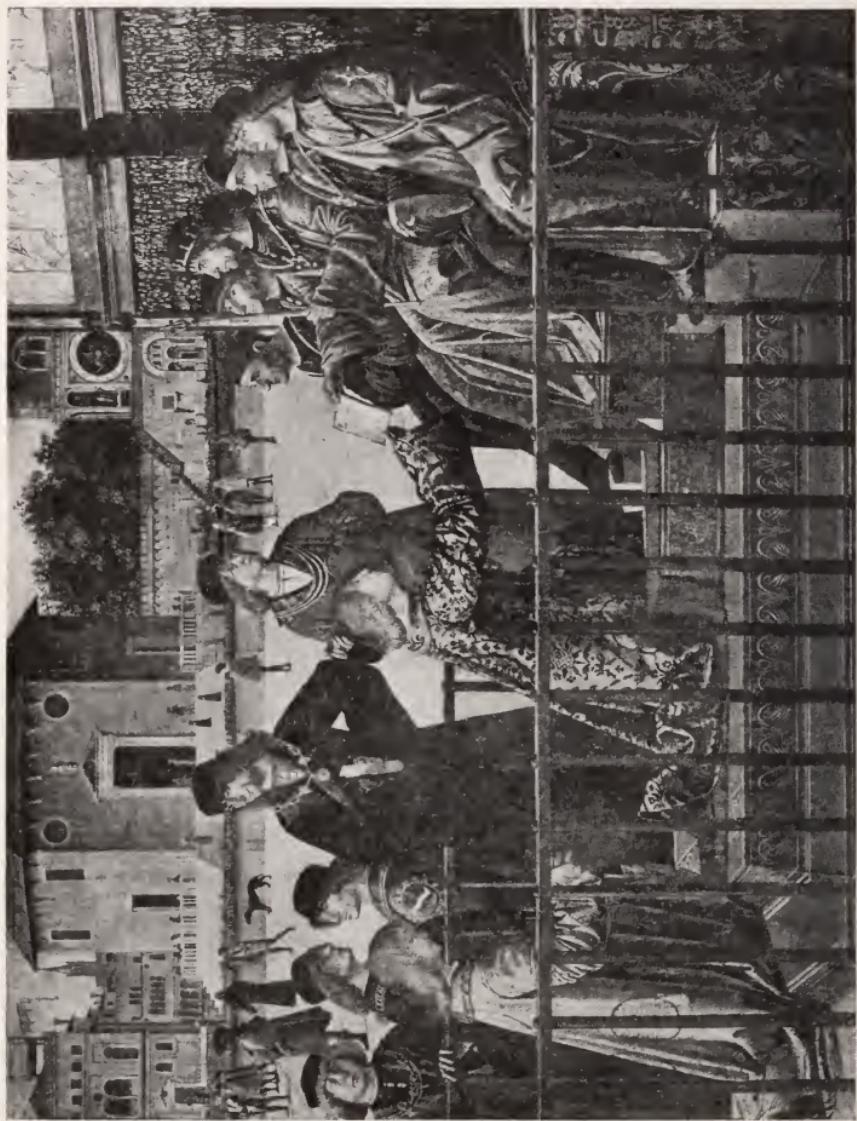


Alinari Photo.

The Academy, Venice.

THE VISION OF S. URSULA, BY VITTORE CARPACCIO

Very notable also, as affording a rare view of a Venetian interior, is the compartment to the right wherein the King is seen conversing with his daughter, and that again at the opposite end of the composition, where some of the retinue of the Ambassadors are disposed at ease in the colonnade adjoining the reception chamber. A similar de-



Anderson Photo.

THE AMBASSADORS (Story of St. Ursula), BY VITTORE CARPACCIO

Academy, Venice.

light in the study of these social accessories not intended to convey any particular message is shown in the leave-taking of the English prince from his father in another of the series, where at one side we see the ships stranded by the tide, and on the other the water-steps leading from the palace. And indeed, throughout them all, Carpaccio's absorption in the life of his own time is shown in the extraordinary care with which he reproduces the costume of the period.

Another study of an interior, specially interesting in relation to the gradual development of Genre painting in Venice, was executed by Carpaccio between 1502 and 1508, as one of a series of pictures to be seen in San Giorgio de' Schiavoni. San Jerome is there shown in his study, and all the details of the furniture of the room, the bronze statuettes, the candelabra on the wall, and the shelves filled with books, are rendered under an effect of light that penetrates the chamber from the window in a manner almost anticipating the work of the Dutch masters of a century later.

It would be easy to multiply instances of Carpaccio's constant attachment to the social life of his epoch, sometimes exhibited in incidents directly connected with the subject he is illustrating, sometimes in subordinate episodes in compositions that have a larger and more serious purpose, but everywhere exhibiting a tendency of his genius that under other conditions than those imposed upon him might have found fuller and more complete expression. A like tendency is to be found in the work of Giovanni Mansuetti, another of the pupils of Gentile Bellini.

For the most grandiose expression of that tendency towards the study of manners which constitutes the basis of Genre painting, we must look forward to Paolo Veronese, whose career carries us to the close of the sixteenth century. It may seem something in the nature of a paradox to connect the colossal canvases of this master with the pursuit and development of aims in art that commonly find expression in paintings of the most modest dimensions. But the essential qualities of every art are those which determine its character, and the essential quality of the art of Paolo Veronese

is that which depends upon the careful observation of the manners of his time. In this sense his painting, which frankly discards all appeal to the spiritual realities which would seem



Anderson Photo.

Academy, Venice.

ARRIVAL OF ST. URSULA AT COLOGNE, BY VITTORE CARPACCIO

to be imposed by the religious character of the themes he sought to illustrate, supplies a searching commentary upon the collective ideals of Venetian painters, even those who still profess a formal allegiance to the claims of the subject they

are engaged to interpret. In point of fact, the wholly mundane and modern spirit in which Paolo Veronese approaches the incidents of the sacred story is a resident quality of all Venetian painting, from the first announcement of its ultimate tendency in the work of Giovanni Bellini to its completed glories recorded in the successive productions of Titian's long career. All that differentiates the work of Paolo Veronese resides in the candid avowal it everywhere displays that the authority of the earlier and more spiritual ideal had been completely cast aside. The costume he adopts is no longer even a compromise, such as Titian still maintains, between the abstract claims of the chosen subject and the dress of the period in which he labours, while his simple and almost childlike acceptance of gesture and movement, drawn from the observation of contemporary life, proves that his spirit is content to ignore the passionate and emotional realities upon which other painters of the school had sought to rely. Although a native of Verona, Veronese settled in Venice in the year 1555, when he was not yet thirty years of age. His great natural gifts enabled him swiftly to make himself master of all those resources in the region of colour which the genius of Titian had placed at the disposal of his school. And it may be conceived that his visit to Rome in 1563, although his spirit owned nothing in common with the genius of the great Florentines whose work there he must have surveyed and studied, no doubt placed at his disposal certain qualities of monumental design he was always able to associate with that more congenial study of manners which was from the first the dominating characteristic of all that he produced. But no external influence could avail to transform the essential features of his art, and it may therefore be said of the great canvas in the Louvre, representing *The Marriage in Cana*, that under a grandiose disguise depending chiefly upon its colossal scale, it is in essence nothing more and nothing else than a painting of Genre. The same criticism would equally apply to the picture of *The Family of Darius* in our own National Gallery, where the scene wherein Alexander receives the



Hans Staengl Photo.

THE SUPPER IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON, BY PAUL VERONESE

submission of the defeated Persian king is utilised by the painter for exhibiting a group of contemporary portraits of the Pisani family, and for illustrating in costume and accessories the opulent splendours of contemporary Venice.

Paolo Veronese died in 1588, and a little more than a century later Giovanni Battista Tiepolo was born. In him we may trace the final and still forcible expression of the essential qualities of the painting of Genre applied and enlarged to the service of decorative art. Tiepolo fell far short of the stature of Paolo Veronese, though he possessed native gifts that enabled him to appropriate in a form clearly stamped with his own individuality many of those great qualities as a colourist which he unquestionably derived from the great Veronese master. If he lacked the saving simplicity that marks even the most ambitious compositions of the latter, he possessed of his own a force and energy of invention that gives him a right to share the glories that belonged to the earlier school, the right also to a distinctive place in the history of modern European art, as foreshadowing in his own practice tendencies that have survived to our own time.

THE IDEALS OF FLEMISH PAINTING

FLEMISH PAINTING

FOR a brief season in the history of modern European art the painters of separate schools and of different lands employed a language that in its varying dialects confessed a common origin. During the greater part of the fifteenth century we may travel from Tuscany to Venice and thence northward by way of Nuremberg to Cologne, Bruges, and Ghent and find everywhere the same spiritual message expressed in terms that in their essential features are identical. The human agents through which this message is delivered vary infinitely, not only in racial character but in the ideal of beauty that inspires or subdues them: the tones of the voice in which the painter speaks to us bear in every country their own native accent: but beneath these manifold differences, indicative of changing temperament and resource, there lies a unity of purpose together with a fundamental agreement as to the means proper for its fulfilment that pervades and controls them all. The voice of Fra Angelico calling from the Convent of San Marco could not fall strangely upon the ears of Hans Memling in his distant home at Bruges, nor is there any quality, however subtle, in the mystic inventions of Dürer that would be likely to escape the searching and sympathetic vision of Andrea Mantegna.

The link that firmly binds together all the art-work of this epoch is not difficult to discover. The supreme authority of design is the marked characteristic of fifteenth-century painting wherever it is found. Certainty of vision demanding absolute sharpness and clearness of definition stands as the unfailing attribute of every school at this dawning hour of art's history when the spiritual realities of

the theme constituted the one absorbing object of the painter's contemplation. And as in the processes of invention registered by means of design, the hand knew no faltering or hesitation, so also in the region of colour there was no room for compromise and no fear of failure in the confident assemblage of positive tints that had as yet lost nothing of their pristine force. Newly mined and freshly faceted, these glittering gems fell naturally into the delicate network of ordered line that had been made ready for their reception.

I have referred to the element of union between the art of Northern and Southern Europe at this particular period that is to be found in the common theme that engaged the energies of its disciples. Broadly speaking, painting during this season of its youth was accessible to no other appeal than that which religion afforded. Its dominant qualities were generated under the concentrated effort to interpret the spiritual realities of the Christian legend: painting, wherever it was practised, had only one story to tell; and it is not, therefore, wonderful that there should have been at the time a constant interchange of ideas that proved to the craftsmen on both sides of the Alps of deep and lasting influence. Painters of the North already looked towards Italy as the home of a kind of beauty and grace in the treatment of human form they were themselves unable to perceive or to express. The dwellers upon the Rhine and in Flanders had not yet explored the new world that the genius of the Renaissance had opened to the wondering eyes of Italy: life for them was still imprisoned within its Gothic frame: and it was not till a much later time that it was able to shake itself free from those fetters it had borne during the long night of the middle ages. On the other hand Flanders had its own contribution to make towards the perfecting of art's technical resources, and we know how eagerly the workmen of Italy availed themselves of those discoveries in the newly acquired medium of oil which, although they had undoubtedly an earlier origin, were only fully developed by the Brothers Van Eyck.

But, after the fullest acknowledgement of those qualities in all the primitive schools of Europe that give to their combined appeal such extraordinary charm and fascination, we are still conscious of radical differences both of tendency and style that are scarcely less interesting and important. As we pass the confines of Italy we are confronted by certain well-marked characteristics of Northern art that distinguish even its most imaginative work from the corresponding products of the schools of Venice and Florence. In reviewing the masters of Flanders from the early initiative of Hubert and Jan Van Eyck to the later accomplishment of Hans Memling, whose career carries us to the verge of the sixteenth century, and in appraising that final development of the school as it culminates in the grandiose inventions of Rubens and Van Dyck, there are two main characteristics of Flemish art, reappearing with varying emphasis in every stage of its growth, which serve to give it a place apart in the story of European painting. We have to notice, in the first place, the almost entire absence of that kind of beauty in the human form and in the human countenance towards which the Italians had been persistently striving from the time of Giotto: we have, in the second place, to recognise the prominence assigned to individual portraiture in the interpretation of every theme, however ideal its significance.

The part played by portraiture in all forms of representative art discloses, perhaps, the most interesting problem of which criticism can take account. Its presence, no matter in what degree it may be controlled or directed by the imagination, is an indispensable ingredient in all painting, however lofty its aim, that possesses any enduring vitality: its rigid exclusion on the other hand affords the surest symptom of decay even in the most ambitious efforts after the ideal. This is made manifest again and again in the fluctuating fortunes both of sculpture and of painting. The neglect of those qualities that are derived from the study of the facts of individual life was the true source of all the failures in creative art that belong to the eighteenth cen-

tury: it is no less clearly the one fatal element of weakness in much of the lifeless sculpture of the Greco-Roman and Roman periods — a weakness so all-pervading as to have induced in modern times an absolutely false conception of the Classic ideal.

But if German criticism, headed by Winckelmann, took too little account of the saving virtue in art that is based upon the perception of individual character, there has been a tendency in more recent days to a corresponding exaggeration in the opposite direction. Mr. Ruskin was so impressed with the supreme importance of the element of portraiture in painting that he was driven to a characteristic misstatement of its legitimate functions. "The greater the master of the ideal," he declares, "the more perfectly true in portraiture will his individual figures be always found"; and he instances the creative processes of Shakespeare in support of the plea he puts forward. Surely no stranger witness was ever summoned in such a cause, for mere portraiture could no more have enabled Shakespeare to create Hamlet or Macbeth than it would have sufficed for the needs of Michelangelo in shaping any one of the ideal figures on the Medici Tombs.

The essential distinction between the Flemish and German painters and their Italian contemporaries who were employed in the representation of the same order of ideas, lies in the fact that the former are wholly at the mercy of the individual forms and features they choose as the instruments of representation, while their comrades of the Florentine school, with a finer instinct, endowed each individual face and figure with resident qualities of character that make them quickly responsive to every varying phase of emotional experience. In each gesture, though it may not be directly concerned with the passion of the subject, and in every subtle movement of features fitly chosen and finely tuned, the forms employed stand as ready vehicles for the message the artist may desire to convey. They are born citizens of the ideal kingdom they inhabit, and are not suddenly summoned from the outer world to answer the special needs of the occasion,

and yet they retain without impoverishment the sense of individual appeal that gives them life and actuality.

In the work even of the most gifted Flemish painters there is no such subtle cohesion between the messenger and his message. An ideal emotion is too often grafted on to a portrait by means that are almost mechanical; and it is, I think, a consciousness of the inadequacy of the chosen type that leads these Flemish painters sometimes to force the note of feeling till it borders on grimace. Occasionally in these religious subjects we note the marks of an evident desire to assign to the principal actors in the scene something that shall distinguish them from their fellows, but the attempt too often results in a weakening of the individual appeal without any corresponding gain of pure beauty. Even Van Eyck's Virgin faces are often the least interesting and the least significant in the pictures in which they appear and are far outdistanced in authority by the subordinate personages in the scene whose unrestrained and searching portraiture carries a higher sense of conviction. Indeed it is hardly too much to say that in the whole range of German and Flemish art there is scarcely a single female face of haunting and memorable beauty. Exquisite beauty these painters can often command — beauty both of spirit and expression — but it is never so directed or inspired as completely to remould the material chosen for its utterance.

This defect certain critics have taken as an index of the presence of higher qualities of another kind. While its existence is conceded it is justified by a claim on behalf of Flemish painters to a spirit of deeper and more searching veracity than the professors of other schools could boast. The attainment of perfect beauty in the type is held to involve a corresponding sacrifice of truth, such a sacrifice as the painters of Flanders, in their unswerving loyalty to nature, were not disposed to make. But this assumption will not bear the test of analysis. There are many kinds of truth that art may render: many also that art may sometimes fitly ignore; and the most obvious is not always the most profound. In the varying vision of reality it is the

apprehension of the deeper truths that makes most surely for the highest beauty, and there is a larger measure of fidelity to nature implying a subtler penetration into its secrets in a drawing of a female head by Botticelli or Leonardo than is to be found in any of the faces mirrored with literal exactitude by the art of Flanders. Nor was this result attained by the suppression of distinguishing traits of personal identity: it was rather the result of a larger and subtler appreciation of the facts of the flesh as a means of revealing the inner secrets of the spirit. Every gesture of the limbs and every fleeting phase of facial expression had been completely explored before the particular needs of the drama under illustration called them into exercise. The more intractable realities of portraiture that Flanders in the pursuit of the ideal found itself powerless to subjugate had been, in the hands of the more gifted Florentines, already so moulded as to reflect the wider spiritual experience of humanity before they were summoned to interpret the particular message the subject demanded.

It may therefore be taken, I think, as an inherent limitation even of the noblest German and Flemish art that it knew no way to escape from the tyranny of the model and had no access to the means of charging the chosen personality with anything more than the momentary mood of feeling the theme imposed. The art of Venice confesses the same limitation, but the Venetian painters were not embarrassed by that intensity of spiritual purpose which constitutes the chief glory of painters like Albert Dürer and Jan Van Eyck. They were saved from the pitfalls Flemish art was unable to evade, not by a firmer grasp of the secrets of ideal beauty, but by a more willing surrender to the external graces of the physical world, either in the human form or in the shapes of outward nature. Their vision, unpledged to any profound emotion, undisturbed by the spiritual dreams that haunted the masters of Florence no less than the painters of the North, left them free to dispose the component figures of their grandiose compositions, though in essence they have no other claim than that which noble portraiture concedes

them, with a rhetorical power that often effectually conceals the lack of central fire.

No such compromise would have been acceptable to the sterner spirit of Flanders, nor did it lie within the means of their painters. They pursued unflinchingly the illustration of the few and simple themes that engaged them, and they were masters of no other resource than that which a direct and faithful imitation of nature supplied.

Of the first beginnings of the Flemish school the actual record is scanty, but in the work of the miniaturists employed upon the illuminated manuscripts we find a native tradition of narrative art that carries us back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. No manuscripts of their time are more beautiful than those produced in the monasteries of Flanders. Though they reveal in their authors the same limitations in imaginative outlook and expressional resource that belonged to the panel painters of a later date, the smaller scale upon which they are executed has sometimes the effect of giving greater emphasis to the beauty of the general design and of partly subduing those harsher qualities that force themselves into prominence in work of larger dimensions. To take only one example — there are miniatures in a Book of Hours made for Jean Duc de Berri in the first decade of the fifteenth century that in their suavity and grace of invention seem to anticipate the softer manner associated with the later achievements of Hans Memling.

It was about this time that, under the patronage of the Dukes of Burgundy, Flemish painting first distinctly emerged from the shelter of the monastic institutions. There are isolated examples of panel painting still surviving, produced almost a century earlier, and there is ample documentary evidence of a succession of artists engaged upon easel pictures from the dawn to the close of the fourteenth century. The most interesting examples of this earlier time that still survive to us are *The Martyrdom of St. Denis*, attributed to Henri Bellechose, now in the Louvre, and the shutters of an altar-piece by Melchior Broederlam, now preserved in the museum at Dijon. The latter, which were



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

THE ADORATION OF THE LAMB, BY HUBERT AND JAN VAN EYCK

S. Babou, Ghent.

completed in the year 1399, afford a fair illustration of what Flemish art could accomplish before it was transformed by the genius of Hubert Van Eyck.

According to conjecture based on the most careful modern research there is a considerable interval of time between Hubert's birth, which is placed between 1370 and 1380, and that of his younger brother Jan, to whom was assigned the task of completing the great altar-piece of *The Adoration of the Lamb*, which Hubert left unfinished at the date of his death in 1426. This important disparity in years might be supposed to render it a comparatively easy task to distinguish their separate shares in the execution of the masterpiece that bears their joint names. In the products of a later age this would doubtless be the case, but painters of the fifteenth century evinced no anxiety to throw off the yoke of tradition and example. The hunger for the assertion of originality is of more modern growth, and we must, therefore, now rest content with the assumption that the younger painter willingly surrendered his own individuality in order faithfully to carry to completion the great design of his elder brother.

Many a visitor to the cathedral of St. Bavon at Ghent who sees this wonderful picture for the first time will confess to a feeling of disappointment. Its manifold beauties make no instant appeal nor are they marshalled in such a way as to yield to the work as a whole a single impression of commanding authority. For the due appreciation of such a picture we must bring to its study something of the patient and reverent spirit that inspired its author. We must follow him in the exercise of his invention into every corner of the composition and realise the fullness of observation that is stamped upon the form and features of each individual actor in this crowded scene. In whatever direction our gaze may turn, whether we look to the throng of virgins and female saints or to the bishops and martyrs who oppose them in the upper part of the composition, or, descending, follow in detail the painter's extraordinary powers of differentiation in the assembled company of the founders and

heads of the monastic orders ranged on the one side and the company of Eastern saints and prophets on the other, we are impressed everywhere with that pervading sense of actuality that overrides any conscious searching for mere pictorial effect. In all these separate parts, no less than in the circle of worshipping angels who kneel about the central figure of the Lamb, there is an overpowering conviction of the kind of vision that leaves the painter no choice but to present the scene in its literal integrity without change or modification even in the most insignificant of its details. There would seem to have been no room here for the intervention of the artistic faculty: with all its accidents and imperfections it is stamped with the convincing authority of an actual occurrence veraciously reported by an eye-witness upon whose memory every incident has been indelibly impressed.

Under the spell of such invention, when it touches this point of perfection, we do not pause to enquire whether art owns any other or higher mission: we listen as children to one who speaks to us with the unquestioning faith of a child: content for the time to yield ourselves without misgiving to the message the painter desires to convey. And what is true of this central composition applies with equal force to the associated panels from which fortune has divorced it. The most important of the panels wherein the story that inspired the painter is continued and completed are now in the Royal Gallery at Berlin, though the separate figures of God the Father and of St. John the Baptist and the Virgin remain at St. Bavon. The face of the Virgin approaches more nearly to a type of ideal beauty than is to be found in any other example of Flemish art, whatever the period of its production.

There are two features of this great work which most powerfully impress themselves, even on the first encounter. The first resides in the unapproachable quality of the colour: colour so radiant in its purity that each separate tint seems to be but newly uncovered from a hoarded store of unused jewels; the second rests upon an appreciation of the beauties

of landscape that far surpasses anything in the same kind in the earlier or contemporary art of Europe. This delicate response to the appeal of outward nature was destined, as we shall see, to form an enduring element in the painting of Flanders. The wide range of observation it reveals, the respect and affection it bestows on the minutest beauties in the growth of flower and foliage, distinguish it clearly from the landscape backgrounds to be found in the paintings of Florence and Venice; and yet it shares with them that controlling sense of design so deeply characteristic of every form of art in the fifteenth century.

Of the career of Jan Van Eyck we have a more ample record. In the year 1422 he attached himself to the household of John of Bavaria and, on the death of the latter in 1425, he returned to Flanders and took service under Philip, third Duke of Burgundy, by whom, in the May of the same year, he was raised to the post of Court Painter. Nor were his labours, at this time, exclusively concerned with his art. — In 1427 Duke Philip was seeking in marriage the hand of Isabella, eldest daughter of James, second Count of Urgel, and Van Eyck formed a part of the embassy to secure the consent of Alphonsus V, King of Arragon, to the projected marriage. The mission, however, proved fruitless, and within the year we find Van Eyck once more in Flanders. Although there is no picture that can certainly be ascribed to these earlier years in the Duke's service, there are many that bear the date of the period immediately following. In 1428, however, his artistic activities were again interrupted by a second mission, this time to Portugal, when Philip, undeterred by previous failure, was seeking the hand of the king's daughter, Isabella. The embassy, which was on a princely scale, had an adventurous voyage. It was despatched in two Venetian galleys from the harbour of Sluus on the 19th of October, but was delayed for three or four days at Sandwich awaiting the arrival of a further escort from London. Setting forth once more upon their voyage, the travellers were compelled by unfavourable weather to seek shelter first at Shoreham and then at Plymouth and at

Falmouth, and it was not till the 16th of December that they reached their destination. During his stay in Portugal Van Eyck painted two portraits of the princess, which were straightway despatched by different routes, so that one at least should be sure of reaching his master in Flanders. The time that necessarily elapsed before a reply could be received was fully occupied by the painter. Many pictures still in Portugal are attributed to his hand, but, strange to say, the two portraits of the Infanta no longer survive. The projected marriage was not fully arranged till the middle of July in the year 1429, and about a fortnight later the bridal party, numbering together a company of two thousand souls, set sail on their return voyage to Flanders. The fleet which carried them was at first driven back by stormy weather, and it was not till the 25th of November that they took final leave of the shores of Portugal, ultimately arriving at Bruges after many vicissitudes in the closing days of the year 1429.

By this time Jan's foreign wanderings were nearly at an end. There is mention of one further mission undertaken on behalf of his employer, but, for the most part, the eleven years of life that remained to him were dedicated to the practice of his art. And they yielded a rich and varied output. We may assume that one of the first of his tasks was to put the finishing touches to the greater altar-piece at Ghent. Ten years had already been devoted to the picture before the work was interrupted by Hubert's death, and as it was not finally exhibited to the public until the early part of the year 1432, it is clear that much still remained to be done when the younger brother's fourteen months of intermittent travel allowed him once more to apply himself to its completion. In this same year, 1432, Jan Van Eyck must have been already busy on commissions of his own, for this is the date inscribed upon the portrait of *Tymotheos*, now in the London National Gallery. By October of the following year he had finished another portrait — that of his father-in-law — which is to be found in the same collection; and to the year 1434 belongs the group of husband and wife which



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

ARNOLFINI AND HIS WIFE, BY JAN VAN EYCK

came into our possession through the instrumentality of Major General Hay, who had purchased it from his landlord at Brussels after his recovery from wounds received in the battle of Waterloo. Critics are not in entire agreement as to the identity of the persons represented in this extraordinary picture. In the catalogue they are described as *Jan Arnolfini and his Wife*, the former being the representative at Bruges of the great Florentine banking house of the Medici. Mr. Max Rooses, in his admirable handbook upon the art of Flanders, inclines, however, to the opinion that the heads are more likely those of Van Eyck himself and his bride, but it is not very easy to recognise in the female features the same model as in the exhibited portrait of his wife now in the Town Gallery of Bruges.

But if there is room for doubt as to the sitters, there can be none as to the unrivalled beauty of the painting. We have seen how important a part portraiture plays in all Flemish painting, whatever its subject and whatever its date. It is an unfailing attribute of the primitive masters in their treatment of religious themes, and it is no less clearly announced as a determining factor in the so-called ideal compositions of Rubens, who found it so impossible to escape from the limitations it imposes that, in scrutinising his treatment of nude form as illustrated in *The Three Graces* at Madrid, or *The Judgment of Paris* in our own National Gallery, we seem to be guilty of something like an unwarrantable intrusion upon the intimacies of domestic life. But Jan Van Eyck may be reckoned as the first master of the school who definitely established individual portraiture in a separate category of its own. To the examples in this kind already mentioned must be added *The Man with the Pink* at Berlin and *The Cardinal de la Croce* in the Imperial Museum at Vienna. Throughout them all there runs the spirit of uncompromising veracity that shuns nothing and exalts nothing, content to record with unswerving impartiality, and with a power that never fails or falters, the facts that nature presents to the artist's vision.

Among the notable subject pictures of this later period of

his life are the Van der Paele *Madonna with St. Donatian and St. George* in the Town Gallery at Bruges, the *St. Barbara*, dated 1437, and *Our Lady and Child by a Fountain* of



Neurdein Photo.

Louvre, Paris.

THE MADONNA WITH THE CHANCELLOR ROLIN, BY JAN VAN EYCK

1439, both of which are to be found in the Antwerp Museum. To these examples must be added the *Madonna and Child with the Chancellor Rolin* in the Louvre, a work which, apart from its human appeal, contains one of the most exquisite landscape backgrounds to be found in any work of the early

Flemish school. This beautiful picture is undated, and to which of the two brothers it is to be ascribed is still a matter of debate among critics. The subtle qualities of finish it contains are characteristic of both, although the choice of its landscape features and their interpretation would rather suggest the hand of the younger brother.

It is not possible here to describe in detail the individual efforts of that considerable body of painters who followed in the footsteps of Van Eyck or who laboured in contemporary association in other cities of Flanders. *The Adoration of the Lamb* holds a place apart among the products of its epoch in virtue of the unapproachable genius of its authors. Elsewhere the spirit that inspired it did not lack disciples, and at Tournai a school of painters had already come into existence whose labours might be said to constitute an independent achievement in the general development of Flemish painting. At Louvain Dierick Bouts, a native of Holland, had taken up his residence about the middle of the fifteenth century and there continued his work as a painter to the year of his death in 1475, while at Bruges Petrus Christus, who most immediately reflects the teaching of the Van Eycks, employed himself upon the illustration of legendary subjects that may, perhaps, have partly prepared the way for Memling's later achievements in the same direction. Robert Campin, the leader of the first of these groups, was born in 1378 and was about twenty-eight years of age when he settled at Tournai. Although he was appointed Painter in Ordinary to the city and laboured there unceasingly to the date of his death in 1444, it is only quite recently that his identity has been clearly established and the pictures he executed definitely assigned to him. If only as the master of Roger Van der Weyden and Jacques Daret, his name would well deserve to be rescued from oblivion. He has besides claims of his own that are by no means negligible, as may be seen by reference to the Merode altar-piece in the museum at Brussels. The central panel representing the Annunciation of the Virgin shows a very delicate and wholly original treatment of the subject; and the naïve and intimate charm



Royal Gallery, Madrid.

THE DEPOSITION FROM THE CROSS, BY ROGER VAN DER WEYDEN

Anderson Photo.

revealed in it is reflected again in the two beautiful panels at Madrid.

Our own National Gallery has recently acquired, through the Salting Bequest, a very beautiful specimen of Campin's art in a small but highly finished composition of the Virgin and Child. Of his two pupils, Roger Van der Weyden has long occupied a prominent place in the main stream of Flemish art. He was born in 1399, was apprenticed to Campin in 1427, and received as a master painter at Tournai in 1432. It is clear, however, that before the initial stage of his apprenticeship was completed he had already executed an important work of his own, and in 1430 he painted four large compositions for the decoration of the Town Hall at Brussels, unfortunately destroyed in the bombardment of the city in 1695, but the general design and composition of which are still preserved for us in the tapestries of the museum at Berne. *The Last Judgment*, undertaken at the instance of Nicolas Rollin in 1443, has sometimes been compared to the great masterpiece of the Van Eycks, but neither here nor in any other of his works does Roger Van der Weyden approach within measurable distance of the imaginative intensity that belongs to the founders of the Flemish school. What he had inherited from their example and what he added of his own is perhaps best illustrated in the design for the composition of *The Descent from the Cross* at Madrid. Here we find, in the treatment of the greatest of the themes religion furnishes, a dramatic quality never sought by Van Eyck and only tentatively exhibited by others of his followers. It is not evenly sustained, for here and there the faces relapse into an expression of unconcerned portraiture, but its presence marks a departure in Flemish art that sets it in direct relationship with the art of Italy.

It is not wonderful that the introduction of this new and appealing element in pictorial representation should have earned for Van der Weyden a position of authority in the Flemish school. As his own practice was in this respect inspired by the tradition established by the masters of Florence, so in turn his teaching exercised a wide-spread influence

over his successors in Germany no less than in Flanders itself. The essential features of his dramatic invention became accepted as types by those who followed him, and his compositions, rendered familiar through the medium of engraving, spread his fame over Europe.

Roger's younger contemporary, Hugo Van der Goes (1440-1482), remained more steadfastly attached to that earlier idea of Flemish art that fashioned itself almost exclusively on portraiture. His madness and melancholy have given a picturesque interest to his career, but of his actual achievement we possess only *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, now in the Gallery of the Uffizi at Florence, as being with absolute certainty the work of his hand.

The career of Van der Weyden offers the link that leads us to the art of Hans Memling, the only painter of the second half of the fifteenth century who, by right of imaginative invention and powers of pictorial expression, can be said truly to recall the splendours of its dawn. Memling's work offers the most complete example of purely narrative art to be found in the whole range of modern painting. No one, I think, has equalled him, no one assuredly has surpassed him, in the power of presenting a story in the terms appropriate to colour and design. We do not look here for the vigour of characterisation that we expect of Van Eyck, because we share the artist's concentration upon the gradual unfolding of the legend, surrendering ourselves with him to the romantic beauty of the mimic world his fancy re-constructs by the aid of a prodigal invention that is lavished on every circumstance of adventure and every detail in the scenes that spread themselves before his enchanted vision. He is the one painter of the North, during the fifteenth century, who seems to have found his own means of access to those secrets of grace in composition, and beauty in the associated movement of the actors he summons to his service, that we regard as belonging of right to the art of Italy. Even in his religious pictures in the stricter sense of the term this is sufficiently manifest. He has been called the Fra Angelico of the North, but the analogy is misleading, for he never even sought to



Hermans Photo.

Hospital of St. Jean, Bruges.

PANEL FROM THE SHRINE OF S. URSULA, BY HANS MEMLING

image that rapture of worship from which Angelico's vision rarely strayed. But the suggested resemblance is at least so far justified that there is rarely a trace in Memling's madonnas, with their attendant saints, of what Ruskin aptly describes as "the angular and bony sanctities of the North."

These madonna pictures of Memling contain no hint or suggestion of the tragic issues that move the imagination of artists differently inspired. As his hand gives them form they have already the remoteness and the tranquillity of a dream wherein the emotions have been finally subdued to the service of beauty. As was inevitable in the work of all artists of his epoch, these holy themes absorbed the greater part of his activities as a painter, but it is where the subject is less exacting in its emotional demands that we must seek for the true bent of Memling's genius. His inexhaustible fancy asked a freer and larger field for its exercise than the central facts of the Christian faith provided: his spirit needed the spur of a story that extended itself in a varied panorama of human experiences wherein his fertile invention could move without restraint. In such excursions into the legends of the past Hans Memling is a fascinating guide. As we accompany him on his way, all the material realities of the story and all the personages concerned in it spring into being, already clothed with the satisfying sense of illusion that belongs to things clearly seen and as clearly remembered. There is no trace of any conscious process of creation: the human actors in each little drama, and the battlemented city or busy port that serves as their background, are firmly locked together in a single vision that comes to us with the authority of reported fact.

It is the ascendancy of these gifts as a story-teller, evoking his highest powers as a painter, that renders the illustrations of the legend of Saint Ursula his supreme achievement; and no one who has not long and lovingly studied them in the Hospital of St. Jean at Bruges can form any clear or full estimate of Memling's powers. It was in the year 1489 that the relics of the martyr were deposited in the shrine that Memling has so richly adorned. Fashioned in the form of a



Neurdein Photo.

Hospital of S. Jean, Bruges.

PANEL FROM THE SHRINE OF S. URSULA, BY HANS MEMLING

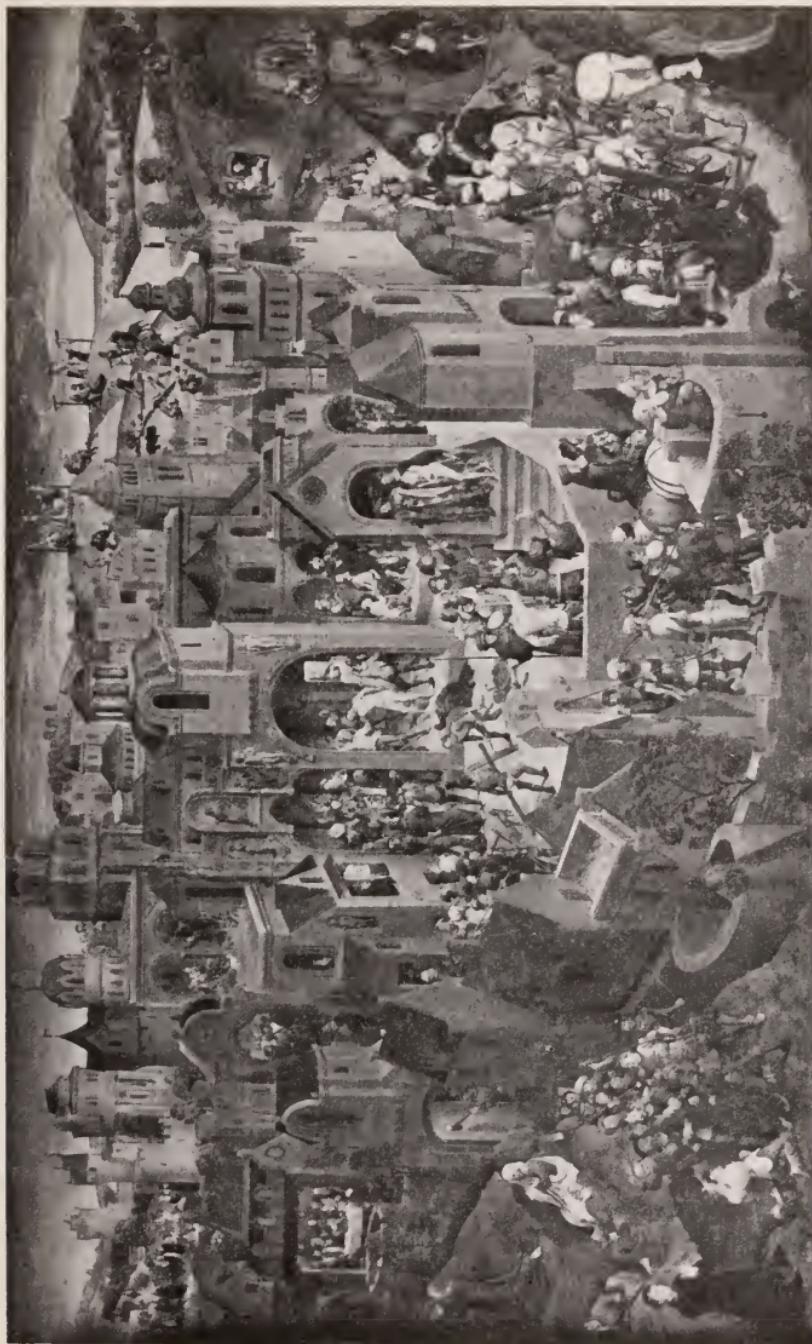
Gothic chapel, the sides of this wooden coffer, which measures not more than three feet in length, are decorated with six superb paintings presenting successive episodes of Ursula's tragic story. The first represents the landing at Cologne, with a background showing Memling's perfect familiarity with the architecture of the city, and in the second, of the landing at Bâle, we see the same fidelity to local truth. The third picture shows us the Pope's reception of the pilgrims at Rome; the fourth the return to Bâle, and the fifth and sixth, forming together one connected illustration, presents the scene of the martyrdom in the camp of the Emperor Maximilian on the Rhine.

To peer into these little pictures and to trace in each one of them the painter's fecundity of invention is like listening to one of the old poet-chroniclers of Arthurian romance. There is the same fullness of incident, the same faith in the saving beauty of the story he is recounting, that we meet in the verse of Wolfram von Eschenbach or Chrétien de Troyes. But even the marvels we find here are excelled by two little pictures in the museum at Turin, where Memling's powers of minute delineation are carried to the utmost limit of perfection. They were executed for William Vrelant, the Bruges miniaturist, and it would almost seem as though Memling had deliberately set himself to rival the brilliance, the delicacy, and the beauty of even the finest masters of the art of illumination.

But the rare anecdotic gifts Memling possessed would have served him little had he been anywhere forgetful of his functions as a painter. His supreme merit lies in the fact that every page of his story as he tells it is a picture that makes its own appeal and needs no vindication save that which resides within the four corners of the frame that enshrines it. It is hardly an exaggeration to declare that Memling makes us forget for the time that a story can be related in any other language than that which he forges out of lines and colour. And as we prolong our study of the manifold beauties in the region of pure art that he assembles for the delight of our eyes, he makes us almost forget again that he had set

out with any story to tell or that he had any other preoccupation than that which is furnished by the pursuit of pictorial beauty. Such limitations as his art confesses were in part inherent in the nature of the task he set himself to accomplish. His imagination concentrated itself upon the rounded beauty of the legend as a whole, and never sought to probe its deeper realities either of character or of action. In regard to the first it cannot be said to have approached the more virile spirit that animated the vision of Van Eyck; while in the sense of drama and of the action and movement that spring from a true appreciation of the passionate possibilities of the theme he is often surpassed by his teacher Van der Weyden as well as by such later masters as Mabuse and Quentin Matsys. And yet in a pervading sense of beauty that infects not only the general grace of his design but the separate characteristics of individual form and feature he far surpasses them all.

It is matter for regret that history should have left us so scant a record of the facts of Memling's career. Careful conjecture places his birth somewhere between the years 1430 and 1435, and he is known to have settled at Bruges in the year 1467. But the ascertained chronology of such of his pictures as have come down to us does not carry us back to an earlier date than the year 1468, when he executed for Sir John Donne the beautiful little altar-piece of the *Madonna with Attendant Saints* that is now in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth. At that time he must have been upwards of thirty years of age, and the picture itself sufficiently proves that he was already a master of his craft. In what way he had spent the years of his youth and early manhood it would now seem vain to enquire. All that we know as to the initial course of his studies rests on the authority of Vasari and Guicciardini, who both emphatically declare that he had been a pupil of Roger Van der Weyden; and yet we may seek in vain in the work of his reputed master for those qualities that distinguish the manner of Memling from that of any other member of the contemporary Flemish school. Even in the earliest of his paintings still



Altinari Photo.

STORY OF THE PASSION, BY HANS MEMLING

Royal Gallery, Turin.

preserved to us, despite the Gothic feeling that pervades them, there are undertones of the painter's voice that seem to echo from Italy. They have not yet gained a complete ascendancy over the harsher dialect of the North that was his natural inheritance, but they already begin to give a measure of suavity to the message he has to tell. We know that Van der Weyden had returned from the South in the year 1450, and it is possible that he may have transmitted to his apprentice something of the more gracious spirit of Florentine design he was powerless to incorporate in his own practice. Or, if this be too fanciful a conjecture, we must take refuge in the assumption that such elements of beauty as Memling unquestionably possesses, distinguishing him from all other masters of the Flemish school, were independently evolved from innate tendencies in his own genius, supported, it may be, by the study of such examples of Italian art as had found their way to Flanders.

With regard to this altar-piece for Sir John Donne, it is sometimes assumed that Memling accompanied to England the embassy which sought for Charles the Bold the hand of Margaret of York. It is, however, equally possible that Donne's first acquaintance with the painter may have been made on the occasion of his visit to Bruges in July, 1468, whither he had journeyed from England to assist in the Princess's wedding celebrations. The next picture in point of date is *The Last Judgment*, now in the Church of Our Lady at Dantzig, and the circumstances under which it was executed go to prove that Memling was already in close touch with the members of the Italian colony in Flanders, for it was commissioned by Angelo di Jacopo Tani, who had recently been transferred to Bruges as the representative there of the Medici banking house. Its intended destination was Florence, but on its voyage southward the ship which bore it was captured by pirates, one of whom is presumed to have presented it to the church in Dantzig in which it now hangs.

The Virgin and Child with St. George and the Donor, in our own National Gallery, and another rendering of the same subject in the Louvre, are assigned to the year 1475. But

Uffizi, Florence.

THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS, BY HUGO VAN DER GOES

Anderson Photo.



the capital achievement of this period of his career is represented by the two little pictures illustrating Our Lord's Passion, which belong to the year 1478 and have already been referred to as among the possessions of the gallery at Turin. No lover of Memling can afford to miss these priceless gems of his art, even if he has to travel far to make their intimate acquaintance. They offer the first clear expression that we possess of the characteristic qualities of his invention, and even surpass in delicacy and brilliance of execution the St. Ursula series of ten years later. Closely associated with them in purpose and method are *The Seven Joys of the Virgin* at Munich, which is assigned to the year 1480. A year earlier Memling had painted *The Adoration of the Magi* and *The Marriage of St. Catherine*, which form part of the collection at Bruges, where is also to be found in the Municipal Gallery the Triptych representing in the central panel St. Christopher attended by St. Maurice and St. Giles, flanked on one side by the portrait of William Moreel, the donor, and his five sons, and on the other by Barbara der Vlaenderbergh, his wife, with her daughters. The chronological catalogue of his smaller pictures is closed by the series of St. Ursula illustrations in the Hospital of St. Jean that were completed in the year 1489; but in 1493 he finished a picture on a much larger scale, representing the Passion, that now hangs in the cathedral at Lubeck.

With the death of Memling the glories of Bruges were drawing to a close, and it is to Antwerp we must now turn in order to follow in their development the later tendencies of the school. Quentin Matsys, in his own work, aptly reflects the process of transition from the earlier ideal which was coincident with this change in the centre of artistic activity. At different periods of his career he is seen to be almost openly at war with himself: at one time willingly surrendering his imagination to the reverential spirit that had guided the primitive masters; at another frankly devoting himself to the interpretation of the facts of life as they were presented in the world about him. At the base of the Flemish artistic spirit had always lain a determined attachment

to that kind of objective truth that finds its earliest expression in veracious portraiture; and, now that the weakening hold of religion left its exercise uncurbed and unchecked, there



Alinari Photo.

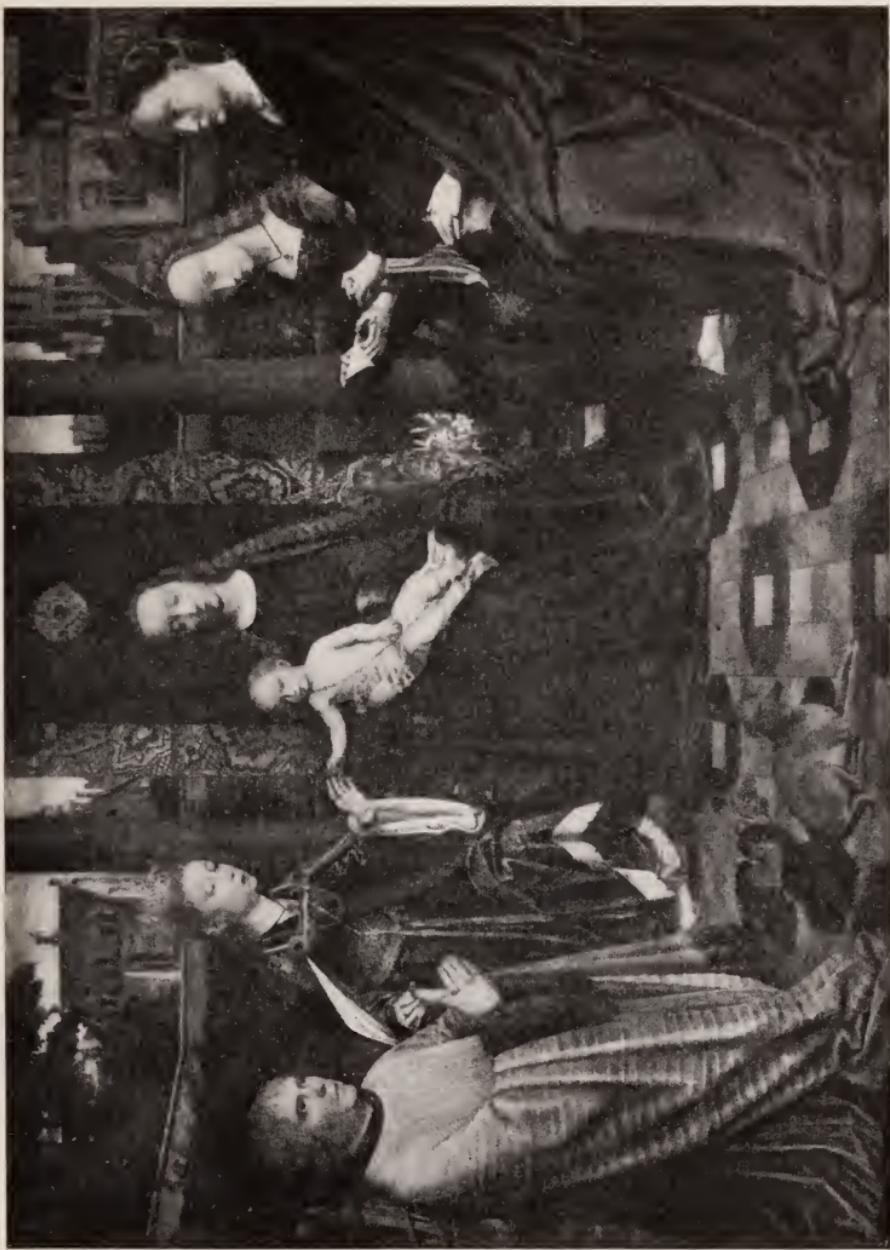
The Louvre, Paris.

THE BANKER AND HIS WIFE, BY QUENTIN MATSYS

gradually crept into Flemish painting an element of coarseness that, from this time onwards, taints even the most considerable achievements of its greatest masters. In the schools of Italy a corresponding revolution had yielded widely different results. There, when the yoke imposed by the church was

lifted, the enfranchised spirit of its painters willingly submitted to the new spiritual authority that was born of the Renaissance. The earlier and narrower conception of beauty that had found its sources in the fervour of religious faith passed by almost imperceptible stages of transition into the wider and more serene outlook that was born of a profound study of the genius of the antique world. But to Flanders this larger and later message came only at second hand, and never deeply penetrated beneath the surface. It was powerless to transform those more stubborn characteristics that lay ingrained in the genius of its painters. The merits and the faults of Northern art at this period combined to render any genuine assimilation of the ideals of Florence and the associated beauties of the Antique not merely difficult, but impossible: and to this we must attribute the fact that the more ambitious efforts of its painters during the sixteenth century are almost barren of result.

To such a degree is this true that if the student of art could make his own itinerary through the ages, the sixteenth century in Flanders might be accounted one of those fallow tracts in Time that he would be disposed to leave almost unexplored. The story of Flemish painting from the death of Memling to the birth of Rubens yields little of individual achievement that can be said to possess enduring significance. On the threshold of the century are to be found certain distinguished representatives of the art whose birth carries us back to an earlier epoch and whose painting, in its essential features, was rooted in those traditions of style that were now beginning to yield place to more modern influences. Gerard David, the pupil of Memling, and his faithful disciple, Joachim de Patinir, whose researches in landscape give him an independent claim to consideration, no less than their more illustrious contemporaries, Quentin Matsys and Jerome Bosch and, greater than either, Jean de Mabuse, belong in spirit to the preceding age. For even Mabuse, despite his ten years' sojourn in Italy, retained to the end of his career essential characteristics of style that declare his affinity with the primitive ideals of Flanders.



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

THE MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHERINE, BY GERARD DAVID

National Gallery, London.

But when we have taken due account of these surviving exponents of an earlier tradition, it will be found that the bulk of Flemish painting in the sixteenth century yields itself almost entirely to a new endeavour to incorporate the widely different ideals of the great masters of the Italian Renaissance. If, therefore, we could pass directly from the workshop of Memling to the studio of Rubens, spanning in a single stride the interval of nearly a hundred years that separates them, we should miss little that is truly characteristic of the school and still less that makes a lasting appeal by right of individual genius.

And yet the movement which the sixteenth century records has its own historic interest as illustrating the first of a series of efforts made by the painters of more Northern lands to appropriate the fruits of that conquest of beauty which had been perfected by the combined efforts of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo. The second deliberate assault on the stronghold of Florentine design was made by the French painters of the seventeenth century under the leadership of Nicolas Poussin, and the third — perhaps the most pretentious and certainly the least successful — was that undertaken by the German painters at the opening of the nineteenth century, headed by Cornelius, Overbeck, and Kaulbach.

It is to be noted about all these three adventures that, although each has its distinguishing characteristics, they are inspired by a common purpose and that they all emphatically fall short of the goal at which they aimed. It was not towards the art of Italy as a whole that they looked for guidance. In Flanders, in France, and in Germany, at the successive epochs of which I am speaking, the triumphs of Venetian painting were almost entirely excluded from the view of those whose spirits were journeying southward. The footsteps of these pilgrims were in every case deliberately directed towards Rome, and it was to the masters of the Roman school, as it was then denominated, that they looked for teaching and guidance. But the title itself is a misnomer and partly suggests the ultimate failure to which all

these several efforts were foredoomed. While Italian painting enjoyed the full energy of creative life there was no such thing as a Roman school : it arose from the ashes of the great tradition in design, established by the masters of Florence, and only claimed a separate existence when the genius of Florence had completed its task and was already showing signs of its ultimate decay.

At first sight it would seem as though the position of the Flemish school at this time was specially favourable to the success of the revolution it was attempting. Here was no case of seeking inspiration from the buried past. The men whose achievements they sought to emulate were in many cases their contemporaries. Some of the earlier travellers, like Mabuse and Van Orley, enjoyed the privilege of seeing Raphael still at work. Leonardo's career was not yet closed, and Michelangelo survived till the second half of the century was well upon its way. But this nearness in point of time is consistent with an impassable gulf of separation in regard to imaginative gift and cultivated resource ; and Van Mander, the historian of Flemish art, who writes of Mabuse that he was "one of the first to bring back from Italy the true manner of arranging and composing 'histories' full of nude figures and of all manner of poetry which was not practised in our lands before his time," was evidently naïvely unconscious that such qualities could not be made the subject of international exchange like other and humbler commodities. So widely was Van Mander's illusion shared at the time, that the title of the 'Flemish Raphael' was not only widely sought, but lavishly bestowed upon painters whose names have scarcely survived.

It is this idea that "all manner of poetry" can be taken over by an act of conscious effort made by the professors of one school after careful study of the masterpieces of another, that lies at the root of the many lamentable failures that are to be found in the story of modern painting. Even men who stood so near to Raphael as to be reckoned by the master himself as among his most gifted pupils were, it may be, scarcely conscious that they were divided, by a whole world,

from the creative genius whose secrets they thought they had divined ; and nothing, perhaps, would have more greatly astonished Giulio Romano when he was engaged on the decorations of the Palazzo del Tè at Mantua, than to have been told that in the judgment of after time he would be held merely to have debased the coinage he so freely used. The immutable law in regard to every art, that perfection cannot be directly appropriated, re-asserts itself again and again and with ever increasing emphasis in the history of painting. Whenever a particular phase of beauty has reached perfected expression it remains henceforth and forever the exclusive possession of its producer. Those who follow after may take the seed and grow the flower again, but the completed bloom withers in the hand that tries to grasp it ; and it was the imperfect perception of this abiding truth that led to so plentiful and so barren a crop of 'Flemish Raphaels.'

Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) was the first man of genius following in the footsteps of the great masters of the Renaissance who proved that he had a better understanding of the possibilities of his school and of his age. In his enthusiastic appreciation of the accumulated wealth of the art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries he was, perhaps, little conscious how imperiously the bent of his own genius was determining the ultimate direction of his studies. It may have seemed to him at the time that he was probing as deeply the secrets of the great masters of design, as he had mastered the principles of composition and the glories of naturalistic colour that were spread before him in the works of the great Venetians. The judgment of time, however, yields a clearer view both of his real ambitions and of the intrinsic value of his stupendous accomplishment, in its extent and variety the greatest that can be laid to the account of any painter of Northern Europe.

Superficially indeed there is nothing to distinguish his ambitions as a student from those of his immediate predecessors of the Flemish school. His dream, like theirs, was to journey to Italy, and like them he thought to capture the secrets which had led the great masters of the South to

achieve those victories in art he sought to rival and repeat. In what way, then, it may be asked, was he enabled to escape the failure they one and all incurred? How did it chance that, apparently following the same road, he was able to achieve a result that was not only clearly beyond their powers, but was essentially different in kind from anything within the range of their vision?

The answer to these questions is, I think, to be found in those deeply rooted characteristics of Flemish painting his predecessors had endeavoured to discard, but which the larger candour of Rubens' genius and the indomitable force of his own personality retained undisguised till the end of his career. The one positive quality making for beauty, which the school of Flanders had possessed from the time of its earliest experiment, was an unfailing sense of colour, and this sense of colour, though expressed in terms widely divergent from those employed by the primitive masters, remains as the conspicuous and indisputable attribute of the painting of Rubens. In the hour when he first took command of the destinies of the school, it is hardly too much to say that he was not only the greatest but, in the full sense of the word, the only colourist in Europe. The Roman school to which the painters of other lands were looking for inspiration at the time of his advent, whatever its pretensions in other directions, had deliberately renounced all claims to those brilliant qualities of colour that had been cultivated and perfected at Venice. Their imitators both in Flanders and in France showed the results of this renunciation, and in France, as we shall presently see, it was not till the advent of Watteau that colour resumed its rightful place in the scheme of pictorial representation.

If we turn now to the negative side of his art, it will be seen that Rubens' painting only expressed with greater frankness and fullness of resource those inherent limitations of style that in the work of the founders of the school are not, perhaps, so loudly announced, but nevertheless already serve as a decisive influence in limiting the spiritual outlook of its masters and in imposing certain restrictions of style from

which even men of the highest individual genius had found it impossible to escape. If Van Eyck was held in fetters by reason of his imperfect sense of beauty in form and by the constant subjection of his spirit to the claims of portraiture, so in a fashion more decisive and overwhelming was the later genius of Rubens. The larger the field his fertile invention explored, the more vehemently dramatic the means he employed for the interpretation of themes either sacred or profane, the more glaring — it may even be said the more blatant — becomes the confession his art is compelled to make of those essential disabilities of imaginative vision that render any serious comparison of his work with that of the greatest masters of Florence only futile and misleading.

After having served the earlier years of his apprenticeship under Otto Venius, Rubens left Antwerp for the South in the year 1600, when he was just twenty-three years of age. At Venice, his first halting place, he met Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, and under his protection he proceeded first to Florence and then to Genoa. A little later we find him settled at Rome, where he was employed by his patron in making copies of some of the more famous pictures of the great masters; but in 1602 he was recalled to Mantua, and in the following year he was entrusted by the Duke with a diplomatic mission which took him to Spain. On his return to Italy in 1604 he almost immediately resumed his studies in Rome, and there he remained until his mother's fatal illness in 1608 summoned him suddenly to Flanders. Before he could reach her she had died, but although her death left him free from any pressing domestic ties he did not again return to Italy. In 1609 he married his first wife, Isabella Brant, and, now settled permanently at Antwerp, he produced during the next nine years most of the more celebrated works that belong to the earlier period of his career. It might be reasonably surmised that this truly remarkable series of paintings which includes *The Descent from the Cross* and *The Raising of the Cross*, now in Antwerp Cathedral, and, among classical subjects, the *Diana Returning from the Chase* of the Dresden Gallery and *The Triumph of*



Woodbury Photo.

The Cathedral, Antwerp.

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS, BY PETER PAUL RUBENS

Silenus at Munich, would immediately reflect the course of his recent studies and that his own personality at this earlier stage of his development would be only tentatively asserted. The last four years of his sojourn in Italy had been passed uninterruptedly in Rome, where, as we know, he not only made himself intimately acquainted with the great achievements of Raphael and Michelangelo, but at the same time occupied himself with independent researches in the field of ancient art.

And yet the effect on his own practice of these Roman experiences was from the first merely superficial. Where his predecessors pursuing the same studies had found it difficult and even impossible to preserve any trace of national or individual character, Rubens suffered rather from the opposite disability; for it may be truly said of him that there has been no painter of any school in whose work racial and personal tendencies were from the first so clearly marked and throughout the whole of his career so decisively asserted. He was himself, perhaps, all unconscious of the extent to which these stubborn idiosyncrasies that stamp the spiritual outlook of his work no less clearly than its technical resources protected him from the kind of failure his predecessors had been unable to escape. His very limitations were, in this sense, a means of salvation, and yet so ardent and enthusiastic was his devotion to the art of the past that it may well have seemed to him at the time that antiquity and the Renaissance had nothing to bequeath which his genius was not destined to inherit.

And yet he never truly apprehended the essential qualities of one or the other. In imaginative vision and in the powers of design needed to give form to the noblest kind of pictorial invention his art remained, even in its most ambitious experiments, as remote from that of Raphael and Michelangelo as from the work of the sculptors of antiquity. He entirely failed, from the example of either, to find a means of escape from the bondage imposed upon his spirit by the presence of the living model, nor did his own penetration into the secrets of human passion suffice to refashion or inform

the individual features that he pressed into the service of his art. This inherent defect of his genius becomes the more flagrantly manifest the further he ventures into the realm of the ideal. Alma Tadema used to say that the study of every school revealed the existence of two classes of painters — those who were form-blind and those who were colour-blind. Rubens occupies a supreme place in the first of these categories. So inherently feeble indeed was his apprehension of formal beauty that in his treatment of the nude his pitiless portraiture of unselected Flemish types, with their redundant folds of glittering but superfluous flesh, becomes almost shameful alike in its ugliness and in its intimacy; we feel instinctively that we have no title to share a revelation that yields no result of beauty. And in this respect Rubens stands as the first great master in the history of modern painting to make the introduction of the forms of naked men and women seem something in the nature of an outrage on taste. Not that there is anywhere in his work a trace of what is either prurient or impure. The spirit in which he laboured, though sometimes frankly sensual, was always too sane and too robust to tolerate the insidious suggestiveness that is the unfailing sign of decadence. And yet the result is sometimes barely tolerable by reason of the fact that the painter's imagination has proved powerless to control the crude realities that he employs as the instruments of his expression. For it is to be observed that this failure is not merely or essentially technical. There are examples in the school of Florence of men in whose work the chosen type falls equally short of the ideal of classic perfection. The *Venus* of Botticelli and many of the nude figures in the compositions of Signorelli are on this score rightly subject to criticism and reproach. But if they have to confess to an imperfect command over the facts of nature they retain the saving grace that is born of the controlling force of the imaginative conception.

Yet, despite his inherent inability to appropriate the essential elements of the design of Florence, there were certain secrets of beauty which the art of Italy had laid bare that

appealed with irresistible force to the genius of Rubens. Though in the flesh he dwelt for so long a period in Rome, in spirit he journeyed no further than Venice. With an instinctive perception of what Italy might still be made to yield by way of fruitful example to the painters of the North, his genius called a halt before those masterpieces of colour and tone that are associated with the names of Titian, Paul Veronese, and Tintoretto. In the region of colour, Venice, for all her victories, still left new worlds to conquer, and among those who perceived the larger opportunities the example of Venice had placed at the service of modern painting, Rubens stands supreme. He enlarged the resources of painting as a separate craft and further enforced those principles of technical practice that had first been explored by the masters of the Venetian school. In certain elements of beauty, most notably in the play of light as it calls into being the subtlest variations of tone in the treatment of human flesh, his achievement had been in no way forestalled and still remains unsurpassed. The feeling of distaste engendered by the coarse contours and excessive exuberance that belongs to his feminine types cannot blind us to the wondrous delicacy of individual passages of painting; for there is scarcely a square inch of these limitless tracts of Flemish flesh wherein a constant brutality in the modelling is not found to be consistent with the most delicate refinement in the rendering of evanescent qualities of tone and colour that until his time had scarcely been apprehended at all.

It was not only by his brilliant researches in colour that Rubens gave a decisive lead to the later art of Northern Europe. He no less clearly dictated the kind of invention that was destined to dominate nearly all the more ambitious essays in monumental design that were produced during the second half of the seventeenth century, and reappeared with undiminished force in that later period when the Romantic movement in France finally conquered the Classic tradition. And here again it was to Venice he turned for inspiration. In the quality of imaginative invention that he brought to

the interpretation of ideal themes Rubens stands forth as the lineal descendant of Tintoretto. In whatever field his untiring energy found exercise — in the illustration of the passionate subjects provided by the sacred story or in the re-creation of the legends of classical mythology — he clearly confessed his indebtedness to the last of the great Venetians.

A superficial study of these two masters may easily fail to disclose those elements of spiritual kinship that so closely unites them. In certain aspects of their art no two painters could be more sharply contrasted. That sense of beauty in form which Rubens was never able to attain fell to Tintoretto as an inalienable part of his birthright. No Italian painter endowed as Tintoretto was endowed, who laboured during the second half of the sixteenth century, could fail to appropriate a part at least of that rich inheritance of formal beauty bequeathed by the mighty Florentines of an earlier generation. The garment they had woven, though it might be only loosely worn, still clothed with something of inevitable grace the work of men who were already in unconscious rebellion against the Florentine ideal. The student who compares Rubens' *Diana Returning from the Chase* — which an injudicious admirer has described as being “as lovely as a Greek bas-relief” — or *The Judgment of Paris* in our own National Gallery with Tintoretto's *Bacchus and Ariadne* in the Doges Palace will realise how wide and impassable was the gulf that separates the one from the other. The elements of antagonism we feel at once to be racial as well as individual, and the impression we gain from their comparison is analogous to that which Michelangelo had finely indicated in a reported conversation with Vittoria Colonna. “You will find,” he says, “that he who is only an apprentice in Italy has produced more with regard to genuine art than a master who is not from Italy. So true is this that Albert Dürer, even when wishing to deceive us, could paint nothing in which I could not at once observe that it neither came from Italy nor from an Italian artist.” What is here said of Dürer applies with even greater force to Rubens. A certain grace that Tintoret could not miss the Flemish master was



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS, BY PETER PAUL RUBENS

unable even to apprehend. The extent of his disability in this regard is made even more strikingly evident in his copy of one of the Mantegna cartoons that now hangs in the National Gallery; for here, in the ruinous process of translation, every essential quality of the great Paduan's design has been dissipated and destroyed.

Nevertheless it remains indisputably true that in certain qualities of invention Rubens and Tintoretto are bound together in the closest spiritual kinship. Another comparison will serve very clearly to show in what way they were related. Let us take now Tintoretto's *Massacre of the Innocents* and the great *Crucifixion* from the School of San Rocco, and set them side by side with Rubens' *Raising of the Cross* and *The Descent from the Cross* of Antwerp Cathedral and his *Castor and Pollux* of Munich. It may be conceded that the elements of contrast are still sufficiently marked. But beneath them, and in a sense overpowering them, is a quality of dramatic invention that Tintoretto had been the first to introduce into Italy and which Rubens exploited with characteristic violence and exaggeration and imposed as a surviving example and model for all historical painters of a later time. Both painters, it will be observed, in the processes of their invention, stand equally remote from the masters of Florence; in both the external drama of circumstance, expressed with inexhaustible energy, has supplanted the spiritual drama depending upon a profounder study of character and a firmer grasp of elemental passion which the great Florentines had perfected. And if we would measure how far asunder stand these different ideals, we have only to pass from any one of these masterpieces of Venice or Flanders to Michelangelo's unapproachable conception of *The Creation of Man* on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Rubens' industry during the whole of his career was truly prodigious, and showed no abatement with advancing years. After his first great outburst of activity which filled the years immediately succeeding his return from Italy he was summoned to Paris by Marie de Médicis in the year 1620 in order that he might execute a series of colossal decora-

tions for the Luxembourg Palace. The project in its entirety was intended to illustrate in one set of paintings scenes from the history of the widowed Queen and in the other to commemorate the career of her late husband. The second half of the undertaking was ultimately abandoned owing to the exile of the Queen, but the first series, the sketches for which were executed in Paris, is now exhibited in the galleries of the Louvre, and even if these grandiose compositions add little to our estimate of Rubens' gifts as an imaginative painter, they at least bear ample witness to the unflagging energy of his invention.

But it must not be forgotten that neither at that time nor indeed at any time was art his sole preoccupation. In 1627, only two years after the Médicis commission had been completed, the painter was employed in a diplomatic mission at the Hague, and in the following year Rubens once more found his way to Madrid, this time as ambassador of the Infanta Isabella to the Court of Philip IV. On this occasion he made the acquaintance of Velasquez who, on Rubens' recommendation, journeyed to Italy in order to study the great masters of the Renaissance. In 1629, still occupied on diplomatic business, he found his way to London, where, among other works, he executed the decorations for the ceiling at Whitehall; and in 1630 he returned finally to Flanders where, for his second wife, he married Helena Fourment, whose face and form reappear so constantly in his later compositions. In 1633 his health showed signs of failure, and two years later he retired to his chateau at Steen, where he occupied himself chiefly in the interpretation of the landscape of the country surrounding his house. His strenuous career, which gave no signs of failing artistic power even to the last, was brought to a close by his death in the year 1640.

In a study like the present, which is mainly directed to a consideration of the changing ideals of modern painting, the later history of the Flemish school offers little that is significant. Historical painting, as it was practised by Rubens' pupils and followers, betrayed the undeviating adherence to those principles of rhetorical design which he had

enlarged upon foundations that had been laid by the masters of Venice. Sometimes with marks of greater restraint, to be ascribed more often to inferior resources than to finer taste; sometimes, as in the case of Jordaens, with a wanton development of the grosser features of the master's style, they merely repeat with varying success the larger victories of Rubens.

But there is one of Rubens' pupils who stands decisively apart. Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641) entered the studio of Rubens when he was still a boy, and so precocious was his talent that when he was only nineteen years of age, he was producing pictures which can hardly be distinguished from those of his master. In 1620, when he was only just of age, he visited London at the invitation of James I, and almost immediately obtained leave of absence for eight months in order to visit Italy. In 1622 he was once more in Antwerp, but after the death of his father in the same year he set out again for Italy, where he remained until 1627. After only a brief sojourn in his native town he set out once more for England, where, as Court Painter to Charles I, he resided until his death in 1641.

It is sufficiently remarkable that although Van Dyck's extraordinary technical acquirements enabled him during the period of his apprenticeship to reproduce with astounding fidelity the essential features of his master's style, his own individuality as it ultimately asserted itself was strongly and sharply contrasted with that of Rubens. Even in his historical and religious compositions, which were never profoundly characteristic of his genius, he revealed from the first a delicacy and refinement of spirit entirely his own, and his superb work in portraiture, a branch of the art to which he ultimately and exclusively devoted his powers, shows a subtlety of characterisation linked to a grace and distinction of style, to which the spirit of Rubens had no access.

The tendency to assign the prominent place to portraiture, even where the subject under illustration would naturally suggest a more abstract mode of treatment, was, as we have already had occasion to note, inherent in all Northern art from the earliest times; and there had been great masters

of portraiture in Flanders before the advent of Rubens and Van Dyck. Reference has already been made to examples in this kind from the studios of Van Eyck and of Hans Memling, but here, no less than in the allied schools of Germany, the masterpieces that win our admiration are the work of great draftsmen rather than of great painters in the modern acceptation of the term. Germany, it may fairly be said, would hardly rank at all in the larger movement of European painting if it were not for the presence within the school of Dürer and Holbein. Their genius suffices in itself to place the art of Germany during the sixteenth century on the highest level; but of both it remains finally true that in the use of the brush their enduring reputation rests mainly upon their achievements in the region of portraiture. During the time they occupied the field there was no representative of any Northern school to dispute their supremacy. It must not, however, be forgotten that this supremacy rested mainly on qualities of design. Even Holbein, who survived his greater contemporary by fifteen years, though his colouring is often exquisite in its purity and faultless in its just association of tints finely selected and subtly combined, had little apprehension of those secrets of colour and tone that Venice was already exploiting with triumphant success.

Portrait painting, as it has been understood from the sixteenth century to our own day, is in its essence a discovery of the Venetian masters, and it was through their influence upon the practice of later schools that the tradition they had established spread over Europe. Rubens, enlarging in certain directions upon the teaching of Titian and Tintoretto, though remaining in other respects always their inferior, carried the message of Venice to Spain as well as to Flanders and to England no less than to France. In France, indeed, its full acceptance, as we shall see, was postponed till a later date, but speaking broadly, the great Flemish master may be said to have been the begetter of that band of giants in portraiture whose work would alone serve to make the seventeenth century illustrious in the story of European art.

Franz Hals, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Velasquez — such a



Broggi Photo.

Palazzo Rosso, Genoa.

GERONIMA BRIGNOLE-SALE AND HER SON, BY SIR ANTHONY VAN DYCK

band of gifted painters, all pre-eminently distinguished by their mastery in portraiture, and all, with the exception of Hals, born within a few years of one another, no previous age had yet assembled, nor is it likely that history will renew so brilliant a combination. Like Rembrandt, who stands forth clearly as their leader, all these painters, with the exception of Franz Hals, had made trial of their powers in the region of historical and ideal composition, but it is beyond dispute that it is as masters of portrait their fame endures. When we think of Van Dyck it is not the author of the earlier religious paintings that we have in our minds, but the brilliant historian of the great Genoese families or he who became at a later hour the distinguished biographer of our own nobility. Velasquez's transcendent reputation as a master of his craft would suffer no diminution, even if his essays in the region of the ideal had never been produced or had remained unknown to us. And even of Rembrandt, though his spirit owns the touch of universality that forbids us to exclude from our estimate of his genius any essay in any field in which it sought exercise, it may also be said that those who know him best and love him best, while they would accord the fullest recognition to the pathos and power of his interpretation of sacred subjects, would still be content to vindicate their worship of him by reference to any one of those inspired portraits wherein he has contrived to press into a single countenance the hoarded experience that life gathers as it goes.

It is little wonder, therefore, that the mastery with which these men, whose names we have cited, probed the secrets of individual character should have exercised a decisive influence upon the course of painting in their own and the following century. The future will have its own story to tell and may still have in store for us victories in ideal design to revive or even to surpass those achieved by the great imaginative painters of Italy in the sixteenth century. But for the present it must at least be frankly conceded that nothing in this kind has been produced of sufficient force and vitality to compete in its appeal with the work in portrait and in landscape upon which the fame of our modern schools most clearly rests.

THE IDEALS OF GERMANY

THE IDEALS OF GERMANY

THE German school of Cologne may be said to be the parent of all Northern art and, therefore, in right of historical position claims precedence over the story of painting in Flanders. Its origin, according to the scanty records that survive to us, dates from the middle of the fourteenth century when, out of the uncertain haze of tradition, two individual names clearly emerge. Of the first of these, Meister Wilhelm, all that is assuredly ascertained is embodied in a single sentence of the Limburg Chronicle, where he is described as a painter "whose equal was not to be found in Christendom and who painted a man as though he lived." Investigations based upon this indication have brought to light the fact that a certain Wilhelm, who is assumed to be one and the same as the painter mentioned in the Chronicle, bought a house in Cologne in 1357 and pursued his art in that city till the time of his death, which is conjecturally placed in the year 1378. The principal works which critics associate with the name of this master are the altar-piece, known as the *St. Clara Altar*, in the Cologne Cathedral, and the winning little Mother and Child, known as *The Madonna with the Bean Flower*, in the Cologne museum. In both of these pictures the austerity of the early Gothic presentation of the mother of Our Lord is softened and subdued; and in the second this tendency towards a more urbane conception is associated with a newly born spirit of intimacy in the rendering of the purely human relationship of the two figures. In it we may find the charm of that mystic and emotional quality that gives its stamp to religious art as it was practised in the school of Cologne at this period and which was further developed in what are known as "the Paradise Pictures," wherein the vision of the painter is trans-

ferred from the tragic elements in the story of Our Lord's Passion to the happier dream of ultimate felicity that was to crown the earthly sufferings of martyr and saint. The group of pictures associated with the name of Master Wilhelm, either as being directly the work of his own hand or produced under his influence, may therefore be taken as embodying in its first complete form that mystic sentiment that gives its special character to the early school of Cologne.

The second of the painters who is distinguished by name, Meister Stephan, may be taken as representing the culmination of this movement, while at the same time there is to be distinguished in his work and in the work of those who shared his ideals a stronger tendency towards naturalism that announced the dawning ascendancy of the painters of Flanders. Stephan died in the year 1451, and in the altarpiece of *The Adoration of the Magi* in Cologne Cathedral which may be taken as the capital achievement of his career, but little of the earlier mystic sentiment survives. Nor was the ideal which it succeeded susceptible in its existent form of any large development. This mystic dream, once it secured expression, had no further mission: in its essence it was a vision rather fanciful than imaginative; and it therefore failed to generate that deeper and stronger force that can only be fed from the richer springs of purely human emotion. The beauty achieved by the earlier masters of this mystical school was a stagnant beauty and in its repetition was apt to sink into a barren formula that was destined to expire of inanition.

But when those elements of natural beauty which it had summoned to its service were incorporated in the more virile spirit of Flemish art the earlier discoveries of the school of Cologne were proved to be capable of growth and expansion. The effect of this union of the artistic forces of the two centuries is clearly traceable in the later development of both schools. It encouraged in the work of the earlier Flemish painters the cultivation of the emotional and imaginative side of their art, and for a while kept in curb those purely realistic tendencies that were destined finally to dominate

Flemish painting. The moment when these divergent and, in some sense, antagonistic influences were held in fortunate balance was represented, as we have already seen, in the masterpieces of the Van Eycks. On the other hand from the time of Meister Stephan painting in Germany manifested in ever increasing strength a movement towards the more realistic interpretation of nature which it now began to borrow from Flemish example. Sir Martin Conway in his admirable monograph on early Flemish and German art has traced with insight and lucidity the influence upon the German school of this period of those Flemish ideals that were circulated through Europe by means of the works of Roger Van der Weyden. He emphasises as an interesting point in this connection that not only did Martin Schongauer of Colmar bear in his own work the impress of Roger's genius, but that it was mainly through the distribution of Schongauer's engraved plates that the work of Van der Weyden was popularised.

But in spite of the growing ascendancy of these naturalistic tendencies, the spiritual and mystic elements which had been first announced in the work of the earlier school of Cologne were not doomed to final extinction. When we think of German art our thoughts instinctively focus themselves upon the personality of Albert Dürer; and under the sway of Dürer's genius we feel the spell of a kind of mysticism more profound and far reaching than had ever been dreamed of in the fanciful creations of Master Wilhelm and his followers. Dürer, in short, embodied for us all that is memorable in the German spirit as it finds utterance in forms of plastic art. Deprived of his commanding presence the story of the German school would sink into comparative insignificance. His spirit, exploring with a force unparalleled before or since those insoluble problems that are born of the tragic experience of mankind, sought no refuge in any shallow dream of felicity, but was content to halt in awe and wonderment in the presence of those unfathomable mysteries his searching vision had laid bare.

As we pass northward, beyond the confines of Italy, we

encounter two great painters — and only two — in whom the creative and imaginative gift is of such overwhelming force as to render their art representative of life in the profoundest and fullest sense of the word. One is Rembrandt and the other is Albert Dürer. Of both it may be said that in all essential attributes of their genius they are as far removed from what is characteristically Italian as in their individual gifts they remain separately distinguished from one another. Yet they possess in common that indefinable sense of universality of power based upon a soaring and searching insight into the most secret realities of the flesh and the spirit, that transcends in kind no less than in degree the special demands of the medium in which, for the time, they are content to express themselves. It is the inevitable attribute of the very highest achievement in every art that we are left partly in wonder as to why its authors should have chosen that and not some other vehicle to convey to the world the message they have to deliver. Dürer and Rembrandt by ways widely divergent both leave us finally in this questioning mood: both equally suggest that they might have sought and found supremacy in some other arena of mental activity: and it is in this sense of superfluous power that they assert their right of citizenship in the kingdom of art inhabited by men like Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo.

As between themselves, apart from this higher community of superior force, the elements of contrast are everywhere very strikingly manifest. The dominating influence of portraiture which was destined, often fatally, to fetter the exercise of the imagination in all the schools of Germany, Flanders, and Holland is indeed frankly confessed in the work of both. In both also we have to recognise a kind of imaginative vision that enables them to link with this limitation a message of wider spiritual import. But there their kinship ceases. As we follow the leadership of Rembrandt we are transported into a world far removed from that inhabited by Dürer. The beauty he mirrors for us, no longer defined in the inexorable language of line, is drawn

as if by magic from behind a shifting screen of light and shade where form in the normal acceptation of the term is dissipated and disappears. Through a veil that is never wholly lifted he summons and dismisses at his will human features whose inner secrets his art has power to reveal, irradiating, with the light of the spirit, faces and forms that can lay no claim to any outward perfections of the flesh, and with a mastery so unfailing and complete that sometimes it seems as though he were deliberately challenging the deformities of nature to resist the compelling and subduing forces of his art.

The means by which Rembrandt effected this victory over material that sometimes seems too stubborn for subjugation will present themselves for consideration in another chapter. For the moment our concern is with Albert Dürer. At the time when he entered upon his career the revelation of beauty made by the great masters of the Italian Renaissance was nearing completion. His second visit to Italy was made in the year 1506 when many of the more eminent painters of the fifteenth century had passed away. Mantegna died while Dürer was on his way to Mantua to pay to the great Paduan that promised visit which had been one of the objects of his journey. Among other forerunners of the crowning period of Florentine art, Botticelli and Signorelli still survived though their life's labours were nearly ended; and with them, as living links between the spring-tide and the full summer of the Renaissance, were Perugino and Leonardo: while still in all the fullness of their powers were Raphael and Michelangelo as the representatives of Tuscan art, and Gian Bellini, Giorgione, and Titian as exponents of the new principles of painting in Venice.

In that city of the North, Dürer must have recognised notable changes since the occasion of his earlier visit in 1494. Even Giovanni Bellini, who accorded to the German artist so courteous a reception, had almost revolutionised his style during the intervening years. The great altar-piece of San Zaccaria, a picture that marks the beginnings of a new epoch in Venetian painting, had been completed in 1505,

and Giorgione had already produced his great altar-piece at Castelfranco. The tradition of design which Mantegna's genius had so long imposed upon the schools of the North was rapidly waning. Light and colour, that were to receive their full expression at the hands of Titian, were already usurping its place, and Dürer, had he not been irrefutably pledged to a different ideal, might well have yielded to these more modern tendencies.

But amidst the dawning splendours of this new era he passed without any essential sacrifice of his own individuality. The characteristics of his art, both racial and personal, were too deeply ingrained to be affected by association with even the greatest of his comrades in Venice. He incorporated in his own practice just so much as his genius could assimilate without essential surrender of its independence, remaining to the last a loyal and unswerving exponent of those finer elements of the German spirit which he continued to express with a force and conviction that argued the possession of the rarest kind of artistic genius. The most delightful example of Southern influence upon his work as a painter is to be found in the little Crucifixion of the Dresden Gallery dated 1506 and which was doubtless executed during his sojourn at Venice. But even here we are made to feel the justice of Michelangelo's comment that "he could paint nothing in which I could not recognise that it neither came from Italy nor from an Italian artist."

Dürer was thirty-five years of age when he returned home after his second visit to the South. His father, a Hungarian by birth and a goldsmith by trade, had already been some time settled in Nuremberg at the date of his son's birth in 1471, and there is no doubt that in his earlier years the boy, Albert, learned something of the goldsmith's craft. That he went at the age of thirteen years from his father's workshop to the studio of Martin Schongauer is sometimes disputed, but it is at least certain that in the year 1486 he entered upon a three years' apprenticeship with Michael Wohlgemuth from whom he must have acquired a full knowledge of those principles of Flemish art that were at that



Medici Bruckmann Photo.

Dresden Gallery.

THE CRUCIFIXION, BY ALBERT DÜRER

time moulding and recasting the ideals of the schools of Germany.

Apart from the two visits to Italy already recorded, the external incidents of Dürer's later career bear no intimate relation to the growth and development of his own talent. He had married in 1494 and after the conclusion of his second Italian journey he seems to have continued the practice of his art in Nuremberg till the year 1520, when he paid a visit to the chief cities of Flanders, where he was duly honoured and entertained. Nor, during these later years was he forgotten or neglected by his contemporaries in Italy, for we know by an inscription in his own handwriting that in 1515 Raphael had sent him from Rome a careful study of nude form intended to show his comrade in Nuremberg the manner of his work. Dürer died in his native city in the year 1528 and was buried in the cemetery of St. John.

The more important of Dürer's pictures are to be found in Munich and Vienna. But it is not upon his accomplishment as a painter that his larger fame as an artist of creative imagination finally rests. The witness of his work in colour would suffice to secure his place as immeasurably the greatest representative of the German school, but it would not differentiate his gifts as in essence distinguished from those of his predecessors or his followers. For that greater Dürer who lives by right of his supreme insight into the spiritual problems of life, and the rare qualities of design that give it expression, we must return again and again to his work with the pencil or the graver. That sway of the pendulum between symbolism and illusion that is, as we have seen, characteristic of the wider movement of art at successive epochs of its development, is in Dürer's case forcibly illustrated within the limits of his own individuality. The magnet of his genius veered alternately towards each of these opposite poles of attraction, and his allegiance to the one or the other corresponds almost exactly with his employment of colour on the one hand and his essays in pure design on the other. Face to face with the many and complex problems that present themselves to the painter, it is the realist in Dürer

that tends to gain the ascendancy. In a letter to his friend Pirkheimer, in which he contrasts the different impressions he had received from his two visits to Venice, he writes : "The thing that pleased me so well eleven years ago does so no longer though no one would have made me believe it if I had not seen it for myself." We are left to conjecture what precise significance is to be attached to this sentence ; but it would seem to be inevitable that he must have been profoundly impressed with those changes in the treatment of colour by the masters of the Venetian school to which reference has already been made. And although they left him finally unshaken in his own ideal, we may be assured that he felt none the less the allurement of those triumphs of imitative skill that his comrades in Venice were then making known to the world. And their influence is made clearly manifest in his own later achievements in the region of colour. It not only served to give him greater mastery in the rendering of all the facts of nature, but led him to develop with increasing emphasis that element of portraiture that formed an inherent part of his artistic endowment. From the beginnings of his career his interest in individual character was plainly manifested, but henceforth in all of his ideal compositions where colour is chosen as the vehicle of expression we may note how strong was the appeal of the separate traits of character in the actors he summoned to illustrate his conception.

And yet during the whole of this time he was alternately employing the more abstract language of design to give form and substance to those mystical moods of feeling that no one else in the whole history of art has embodied with such convincing power. With the pencil or with the graver in his hand even the simplest and commonest realities at once assumed something of ideal significance. No man ever attained the same sense of mystery by means that appear so mechanically exact in their imitative processes. Dürer's symbolism and power of profound spiritual suggestion would seem indeed to be inseparable from a rendering of the facts of nature that is both literal and unflinching. His manage-

ment of the problems of light and shade has in all his work in black and white an epical character that is sometimes only faintly suggested in his experiments in colour. And this applies equally to his treatment of human form and to his interpretation of the most minute realities of inanimate Nature. It is here therefore that we must seek the Dürer whose memory is cherished by posterity. The more celebrated of his engraved works, including *St. Hubert*, *St. Gerome*, *The Knight and Death*, and the incomparable *Melancholia*, were all executed subsequent to his Italian wanderings and all serve to prove that the overmastering impulse of his own genius overpowered every other influence with which he was brought into contact.

These works, either in the original or in reproduction, are accessible to every student; and we enjoy in England the further good fortune that we possess among the treasures of the British Museum a series of Dürer's original drawings that is only rivalled by the collection in the Albertina Gallery in Vienna. They were originally comprised in a folio volume marked with Dürer's monogram and bearing the date 1637. At one time it formed part of the Arundel Collection and is supposed to have been the property of one of Dürer's friends. But the fact that some of the examples contained in it are not by Dürer's hand but own a later origin would seem to render this suggestion improbable.

One of the most interesting aspects of Dürer's art appears in his treatment of landscape, and there are in this volume several very beautiful studies from nature executed both in colour and with the pen. One of these is the scene which the artist has introduced into his engraved design of *The Virgin with the Monkey*. Here, however, it has the added grace of colour. In studying its beauty and in marking its absolute precision of workmanship we are conscious at every turn of the presence of qualities seemingly inconsistent and yet brought by his mastery into perfect union and accord. As we gaze at this simple scene, we recognise that all the materials out of which it is fashioned are intimately familiar to our experience, and yet through the magic of his art they



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

From the Engraving.

MELANCHOLIA, BY ALBERT DÜRER

are made to seem at the same time strange and remote. By a thousand signs of patient labour the close contact with Nature is everywhere asserted : each minutest fact is stamped with individual character, and all the parts of the landscape, — the wide expanse of idle water, the narrow house against the sunset sky, the rough banks with their image mirrored in the stream and the old boat moored to the side, — are revealed with literal exactness. And yet these common realities are so transfigured as to become component parts of an ideal world. They are brought near to us as the shapes of a dream, while at the same time they have something of the mystery belonging to a world our feet have never trodden. It is impossible to miss and yet it is difficult quite to define the source of the ideal significance of such a design. Nothing is exaggerated or deliberately forced for an effect, and from this point of view the drawing would seem to be no more than an exact transcript of the materials spread out before the artist. But as we gaze longer and look deeper it acquires a certain grandeur and solemnity that lie beyond the reach of a merely literal aspect. Though no separate rendering of nature is lost or changed, the accumulated details, as though by a magic known only to the artist, are made to mirror a mood of feeling that strongly appeals to the imagination. Each individual incident of the scene is charged with something of abstract character and bears in the intensity of its rendering a message that seems to proceed directly from the soul of the painter. The silent distance of quiet water looks as though from the first creation of the world it had served no other purpose than to mirror the sky above : the tufts of grass upon its barren shores with each blade sharply outlined have the appearance of things that once seen are stamped eternally in remembrance : and the rare signs of human life the landscape offers, the lonely house and the boat that rests upon its shadow, all minister to an impression that is not begotten by any triumph of mere imitative fidelity.

There is another study of fir trees surrounding a stagnant pool, that serves further to enforce that strange feeling of

mystery that accompanies and colours the uncompromising realism of Dürer's method. The foreground alone is complete in regard to execution, the foliage of the trees being merely suggested by even washes of colour, and yet the whole bears the stamp of a penetrating vision that, while it misses nothing, is able to impart to the whole a deeply poetic impression. There is another drawing in the Royal Collection at Windsor which may be cited in further illustration of Dürer's powers in the field of landscape art. It is an allegorical composition which betrays in certain of its features the artist's indebtedness to Italian influences, but, behind the figures is a view of Nuremberg from the West almost identical with the background of his engraving of *St. Anthony* and with a part of the landscape introduced in a picture painted in 1506 for the German merchants at Venice. Taken in conjunction with other paintings and engravings from his hand, these studies support the conclusion that Dürer's landscape was the most impressive that had yet appeared in the art of modern Europe. Impelled by a spirit of realism so searching that by comparison the realism of Venice seems almost superficial, and yet at the same time inspired by an imaginative temper that Florence could not surpass, he created in this department a style that was peculiarly his own, a style wherein a frank dependence on nature is so subtly interwoven with symbolism that even the simplest study from his hand is never an uninspired record of fact.

It is interesting to compare Dürer's treatment of outward nature with that widely different system of landscape which at the time of his last visit to Italy was beginning to emerge from the studio of Giovanni Bellini and was destined afterwards to be perfected by Titian. We stand here at the parting of the ways, for as Dürer's vision of the beauties of the external world remains firmly based upon the faultless rendering of the permanent facts in nature, Titian, by his dawning apprehension of the fleeting realities of colour and tone, was already laying the foundation of a school of landscape art that was destined in succeeding centuries to supplant this earlier ideal.

There are other drawings in this and other collections dealing exclusively with the human form that bear witness to Dürer's early and lasting allegiance to the genius of Andrea Mantegna. In the Albertina are two designs of the year 1494 (which may be taken as the date of Dürer's first visit to Venice), which are faithful copies of Mantegna's engravings, and here in the British Museum is a half-length nude male study executed with slanting strokes of the pen that is clearly reminiscent of the Paduan's method. His unquenchable yearning towards an ideal that remained in constant conflict with his overmastering gifts in portraiture is suggested again by one of the most beautiful drawings the volume in the Museum contains. It presents to us the winged head of a cherub, and is executed in black on green tinted paper heightened here and there with body colour and touched upon the cheek with a delicate flesh tint. The head, half turned away, reclines upon the feathers of the wing that springs from the neck: the eyes are cast downward, the lips half opened, and the hair clustering in curls around the brow.

These are only a few examples taken at random from this wonderful collection, but they serve to emphasise the message conveyed by his work in engraving that it is through the abstract language of black and white that the imaginative side of his art is most clearly expressed. The most ambitious of Dürer's works in oil were executed in the five years immediately succeeding his return from Italy, beginning with *The Feast of the Rosary* and the *Adam and Eve*, both of which were finished by the end of 1507. They culminated in *The Adoration of the Trinity*, which was completed in 1511. To this time also belongs *The Assumption of the Virgin*, which was destroyed by fire at Munich in the year 1673. In the years that immediately followed his most important output as a painter, he produced the most notable of his works on copper, including the *St. Jerome* and the *Melancholia*, and the student has, therefore, ample material for comparing the contemporary expression of his genius through the contrasted vehicles of painting and pure design,

a comparison which, I think, can only tend to strengthen the conviction that it was in the latter medium that the more poetical side of Dürer's spirit found the more congenial opportunities of expression.

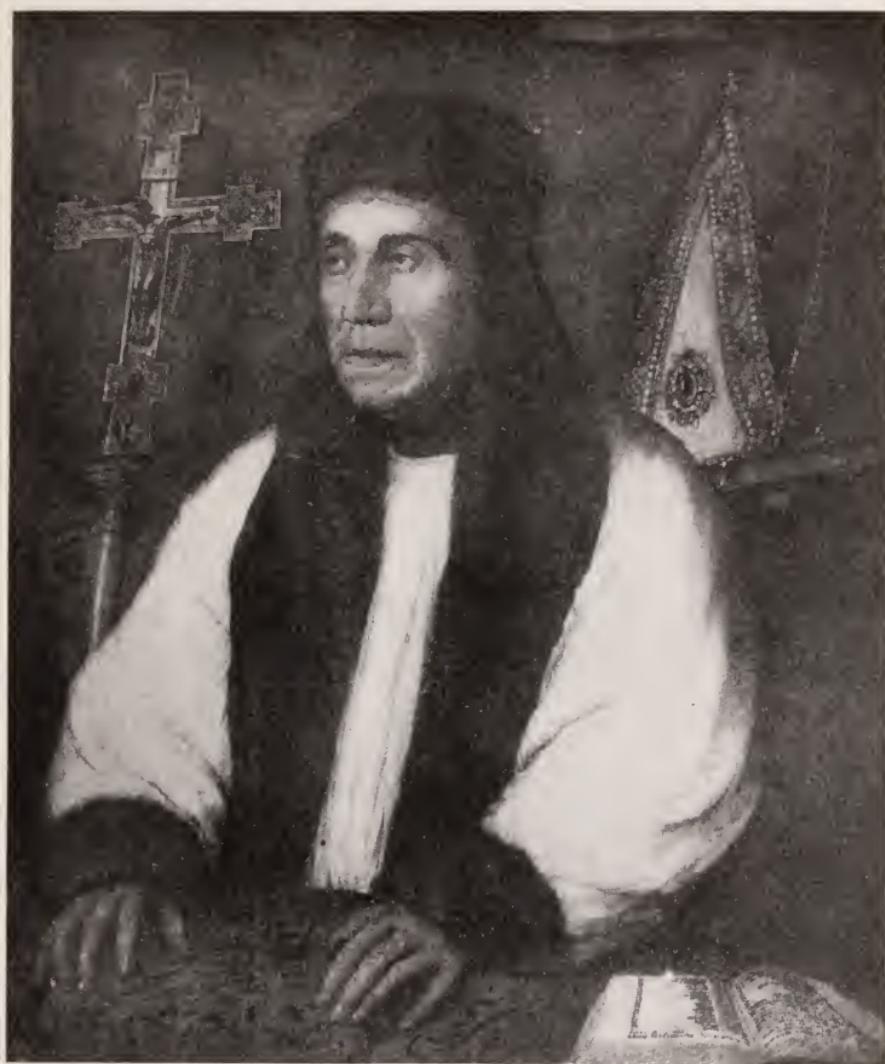
Among the contemporaries and followers of Albert Dürer who acknowledged his influence, the most distinguished as a painter was Hans Burgkmair (1473–1531), father-in-law of the elder Holbein, who stands as a link between the two supreme masters of German art. Burgkmair is, perhaps, best known as the author of the series of wood engravings representing *The Triumph of the Emperor Maximilian*. The force of Dürer's example as an engraver is further illustrated in the work of that gifted group of disciples known from the small scale of their designs as 'The Little Masters.' Albrecht Altdorfer (1480–1538), Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550), and Heinrich Aldegrever (1502–1558) are, perhaps, the best known of this little company, but it cannot be said of any of them that they did more than reflect with diminished power the example of the master they followed. Contemporary with Dürer, though not of his school, was Lucas Cranach, whose son, the younger Lucas, afterwards became a pupil of the master of Nuremberg.

The art of Holbein is linked to that of Dürer by their common allegiance to those principles of design that find their ultimate source in the initiative of Giotto. Holbein indeed is almost the last of the great painters, certainly the last of the great portrait-painters of the world, whose final appeal resides in his mastery as a draftsman. As Dürer in the opening years of the sixteenth century had firmly resisted the newer ideals to which Venice was then giving their first expression, so Holbein with the same unswerving purpose held fast to that language of line which his great contemporaries in portraiture were beginning to discard. Born in the year 1497 he was some twenty years Titian's junior, and yet he exhibited no temptation up till the time of his death in 1560 to accept any of those innovations in style for which Titian is mainly responsible. It is indeed

the pre-eminent claim of German art as represented by Dürer and Holbein that it retained, in almost complete integrity, those earlier attributes of style that in the land of their origin were already yielding to newer and different impulses. Some of the greatest masterpieces of North Italian portraiture, the work of Titian, Tintoretto, Moretto, and Moroni, were given to the world during the same years that Holbein was engaged in England upon some of the most superb examples of his skill in the same department, and yet nothing could well be more striking than the contrast between his method and that of his great contemporaries in Venice.

The story of Holbein's life, in so far as it is known to us, throws but little light upon his career as a painter. His first seventeen years were spent in his native town of Augsburg, and, although it is known that he received instruction in his art from his father, we have no trace as to the actual course of his studies. In the year 1514 he migrated with his elder brother Ambrose to Basle, attracted thither, it is presumed, by the prosperity of the great printing firms of that city in whose service he laboured as an ornamental designer. Save for a brief visit to Lucerne in 1516, he continued to reside in Basle till the year 1526, when he made his first visit to England, passing on his journey by way of Antwerp, where he made the acquaintance of Quentin Matsys. His principal achievement up to that time had consisted in his mural paintings for the Rathaus in Basle, executed in 1521, and his great picture known as *The Madonna of the Meyer Family* at Darmstadt, a work perhaps more widely known by the beautiful replica in the Dresden Gallery. During his stay in England he was befriended by the patronage of Sir Thomas More, at whose house in Chelsea he is said to have resided. To this first visit to England belong several of his most admirable portraits, including the *Archbishop Warham* in the Louvre and the portrait of *Bishop Fisher*. In 1528 he was once more in Basle, but three years later he permanently took up his residence in England, where he was appointed painter to the King, in whose service he proceeded in 1538 to Belgium to paint the portrait of Christina of Denmark,

the widowed Duchess of Milan. In 1543 he died in London of the plague.



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Louvre, Paris.

ARCHBISHOP WARHAM, BY HANS HOLBEIN

In view of his long residence in this country, it is not surprising that we should possess in our private and public collections ample material for the study of Holbein's genius.

The National Gallery boasts two capital examples of his powers as a portrait-painter, the full length of the Duchess of Milan already mentioned, and the group of two figures known as *The Ambassadors* who have been identified as Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve, bishop of Lavaur; — while distributed over the private houses of England are numerous examples attributed to his hand, amongst which may be distinguished several of his unquestioned masterpieces.

But, apart from finished works in colour, we possess in England other and even more valuable material for the true understanding of his genius. Those who are intimately acquainted with the superb series of drawings in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle can be in no doubt as to the true foundation of Holbein's great fame in portraiture. If he had left nothing to prove his great gifts as a colourist, these drawings would alone suffice to vindicate his incomparable mastery in the region of design. His searching presentation of the physical idiosyncrasies of each individual character is accomplished by means that everywhere assert his unfailing command over the subtlest realities of form and expression, and explain to us why even in his work as a painter he never permits the claims of tone or colour to obscure the final appeal of the draftsman. His interesting designs for silver work and jewellery, possessed by the British Museum, give play to the same essential qualities exercised in the invention of ornament, and afford testimony to the lasting influence upon his genius of his earlier experiences in the great printing houses at Basle. It is not surprising that with this dominating impulse towards design, his gifts as a colourist during the whole of his career should have held a subordinate place in the general scheme of his painting. And yet those gifts, within the limits he assigned to their exercise, were of the highest order, and were, perhaps, never more triumphantly exhibited than in the Meyer Madonna, which belongs to a comparatively early period of his career. In the same Gallery in Dresden where this Madonna stands hangs the portrait of Morett, jeweller to King Henry VIII,

that belongs to a much later period of his career, and a comparison of the two pictures enables us to realise, despite a greater subtlety in the flesh painting which the latter reveals, how loyally, throughout the whole of his life, Holbein preserved his first allegiance to those qualities in design of which he remains the last great European representative.

THE IDEALS OF HOLLAND

THE IDEALS OF HOLLAND

THE Dutch school, in so far as it has left its mark upon the story of modern art, endured for less than a hundred years, and is dominated by the genius of Rembrandt. Frans Hals, the eldest of the gifted group of men who have made it famous, was still a youth at the opening of the seventeenth century, and Hobbema, the latest of its great representatives, died before the eighteenth century had passed its first decade. There had been an earlier school of Dutch painting, a school which claims Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533) as its most eminent exponent, but its ideals are scarcely distinguishable from those pursued by the contemporary painters of Flanders and Germany and have little bearing upon the later development in art that has given Holland its place in the story of modern European painting. Nothing indeed is more remarkable than the detachment from tradition and the independence of external influence exhibited by the Dutch Genre painters of the seventeenth century. Painting, as they practised it, leads us back to no period of childhood and reveals no preliminary stage of immaturity. It sprang upon the world ready armed and fully equipped and, within the well-defined limits it was content to accept, attained a sudden perfection to which the story of the painter's craft in other lands offers no exact parallel.

The material prosperity of Holland at this period and the spiritual revolution effected by the Reformation are factors that cannot of course be ignored in our consideration of this extraordinary development. In other parts of Europe, however, the same influences had not always operated to the advantage of art. Patronage, which springs naturally into being as the result of accumulated wealth, however willing it may be to encourage genius, is powerless to create it, and

history does not uniformly support the assumption that a period of national and political activity of necessity brings in its train a rich harvest of artistic production. On the other hand the abrupt severance of those intimate relations that had so long subsisted between art and religion did not everywhere prove of service to the painter's cause. Its effects had indeed been for the most part negative and destructive; and in schools long established, where, in its service to religion, the vision of the artist had gradually widened its outlook until it finally penetrated the deeper problems of the human spirit, the new faith brought no fresh creative impulse to atone for its forcible termination of established tradition.

It cannot be contested, however, that in regard to the special aims of the Dutch painters of *Genre* the negative and destructive elements of the Reformation did prove of distinct and definite advantage. At the close of the sixteenth century painting throughout the whole of Europe was staggering under the weight of associated ideas both ethical and intellectual. The painter's direct vision of outward nature had become embarrassed and clouded by claims not directly generated within the proper arena of his art. And as these claims which genius alone could safely satisfy were pressed upon men less greatly endowed, the language of art lost lucidity and its utterances became clogged and enfeebled. It was the task of Dutch painting — a task in the accomplishment of which it was doubtless powerfully aided by the sudden removal of this accumulated lumber left by the past — to renew in its primitive simplicity the elemental compact between art and nature. The painters of *Genre* who sprang into being in Holland at the opening of the seventeenth century were free from all those intellectual responsibilities with which the professors of preceding schools had been oppressed; and their triumph, it may be conceded, was largely due to the fact that there were no ideas they were summoned to express save those which were suggested by the actual life of their time.

In a very definite sense, therefore, it may be said that the Dutch school of *Genre* painting represents the most im-

portant independent movement in art that had taken place in Europe since Giotto's initiative had opened a new world of beauty to the wondering eyes of Florence. There had been other and earlier movements more fruitful in new discoveries of beauty, but they had grown out of the gradual expansion of ideals already accepted. It is in this sense that the word "independent" is strictly relevant to the revolution effected by the painters of Holland. Within the circumscribed limits wherein they laboured their art involves not only a change of material, but with it a corresponding transformation in the purpose and methods of its interpreters. And this twofold revolution was, in a measure, the indirect result of the enfranchisement effected by the Reformation. A religious upheaval that had set its mark upon every field of human activity left the followers of the new faith in Holland who were employed in the service of art wholly unpledged to any ideal save that which nature itself suggested and supplied. Not by any gradual process of internal change, but as the result of an upheaval as sudden as it was complete, the spiritual impulses that had hitherto shaped and dominated nearly every form of imaginative invention were arrested in their operation; for when the authority of the older faith was finally destroyed, it also carried in its overthrow that rich inheritance of ideas, partly Pagan in their source and in their significance, that the genius of the Renaissance had grafted upon an art which had served its first apprenticeship to the church.

Upon a slate thus wiped clean of all past records, the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century were left free to inscribe their own message. And the substance of this message is no less novel and characteristic than the language chosen for its utterance. Here we are brought face to face with an astonishing development in the painter's craft which this small group of men effected. Holland, like Flanders, had submitted itself for a season to Italian influences: and from among its representatives of the sixteenth century we have only to cite the names of men like Marten Van Heemskerck and Cornelis Van Haarlem to prove how

complete that submission had been. So complete, indeed, that the movement of which we are now taking account becomes, by its assertion of a new attitude, only the more interesting and remarkable. For, with the dawn of the seventeenth century, painting, as the new school understood it, was deliberately shorn of those larger pretensions which had been so amply vindicated in the great achievements of Italy. It no longer affected to interpret the higher aspirations of the human spirit or to mirror its larger emotions. It was content to image only the more intimate and familiar moods of feeling that are born of the uneventful happenings of daily life, sometimes descending, as we know, to the portrayal of the grosser and more sordid aspects of national character.

Critics and historians who, in recent times, have sought to account for so powerful an outburst of artistic activity have been at pains to point out that Holland at this time was not merely a great centre of commercial prosperity, but that it was also the home of a vigorous intellectual life. The fact is in itself unquestionable, but in relation to contemporary Dutch painting it remains nevertheless almost wholly irrelevant. The more clearly we are made to acknowledge the existence of a developed form of classical and literary culture, the more striking becomes the detachment of the Dutch school of painters from any associations that might be deemed likely to follow from this larger intellectual environment. Even in the case of Rembrandt, were the few pictures from his hand that own a classical or mythological origin wholly excluded from our knowledge, the fact would not materially alter our estimate of his genius in its concentrated pre-occupation with the direct appeal that nature offered to his imagination. And what is true of the master applies with even greater force to his contemporaries and followers. Speaking broadly, it may be said of them all that they had no thought to bestow upon any message that came to them except through the medium of their own observation and experience. And although they differed widely among themselves in the varying measure of beauty

each individual painter was able to draw from the new field of reality they so diligently explored, they owned this one quality in common, that their attention was riveted upon the facts of the world about them and that they acknowledged and revealed in their work no other source of inspiration.

That this limitation in their spiritual outlook should have been strongly reflected in the chosen means of representation was natural and inevitable. The same independence that is shown in their choice of material is no less clearly asserted in their technical methods. The sense of "style" as it had been created and perfected by earlier schools of painting is here almost wholly absent. The triumphs they achieved owe little to earlier example or to the support of any other art than their own. The great painters of Florence had willingly and deliberately linked their labours with those of the sculptor and the architect, and their practice frankly confesses the results of this interchanging influence. Dutch painters, on the other hand, give no hint in their work of the existence of any other art than that through which they seek expression; and yet in this narrower arena they were able in an incredibly short space of time to develop a style of their own that in a certain kind of subtlety has never been surpassed. Into whatever sordid recesses in the lives of the people they chose to penetrate they carry with them a saving sense of delicacy and beauty that lifts and illumines the humblest and the simplest themes upon which their industry is expended.

Such an astounding result as their combined efforts achieved in something less than a century would not have been possible but for the presence in the Dutch school of one of the mightiest masters who ever entered the field of art. Rembrandt's immediate connection with the sudden growth of the art of Genre painting is in a sense almost negligible; and even his system of interpretation, which became, as his career advanced, a thing wholly personal and individual, is only faintly reflected in the practice of the more distinguished of those who fell within the range of his influence. After Rembrandt himself there are no greater masters



Medici Bruckmann Photo.

Imperial Gallery, Vienna.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST, BY REMBRANDT VAN RYN

among the Dutchmen than Jan Steen and Jan Vermeer of Delft, men whose technical methods are in their separate characteristics widely different from his; but they and their comrades of lesser stature in the school caught a measure of reflected glory from Rembrandt's deeper revelation of the secrets of nature, and each individual was able to apply this larger message to the modest requirements of his own special task.

But if Rembrandt, in this respect setting the example to his less gifted associates, cut himself adrift from earlier tradition, in his case at any rate this was the result of deliberate artistic purpose and is not to be ascribed to any limitation either in intellectual outlook or artistic knowledge. For, as we have reason to know, the whole field of European art was familiar to him. He was a great connoisseur and collector as well as a great creative artist, and either by means of original examples that had found their way to Holland or through the medium of engraved reproductions he had made himself acquainted with the masters of every school and of every period preceding his own.

But this larger knowledge did not tempt him to depart from a resolution formed in the season of his youth to live and labour in his native land. We have interesting evidence to this effect from one of his contemporaries who visited Rembrandt's studio in the years 1629 and 1630, while the painter still resided at Leyden. Constantin Huygens, a notable scholar who had as a young man made a serious study of art, laments the indifference of Rembrandt and his companion Lievens to the advantages they might derive from foreign travel. In a passage quoted by Mr. Baldwin Brown in his excellent study of Rembrandt he says: "These notable youths, from whom I found it hard to tear myself, have only one fault; they are so calmly satisfied that they hold Italy in small account though they could visit it in a few months. This is, forsooth, like a vein of madness in tempers so noble, that while they are young they neglect to acquire what alone is wanting to the perfection of their art.

Oh, if only they were familiar, as I should wish, with the Raphaels or Michelangelos and could feast their eyes on the works of these great spirits, how soon would these youths, born, if only they knew it, for the perfecting of art, be able to surpass all that there they found and even bring the Italians to Holland! But I must not omit to mention the excuse in which they fold themselves and explain their inactivity; for they say that while in the flower of their years, of which they must make the most, they have not the time to spend in travel; and, furthermore, that now-a-days, such is the love of the Kings and Princes of the North for paintings and so careful their choice, that the finest Italian pictures are here to be seen and that they are brought together here into collections, whereas in Italy they are scattered far apart." But while Huygens deplores Rembrandt's and Lievens' decision in this particular respect he bears the warmest testimony to their zeal and industry: "Even the innocent pleasures of youth," he says, "have but slight attractions for them because these involve a loss of time. It is as if one were looking at old men full of years whose enjoyment of all such childish things belongs to the former times. Often have I wished that these excellent young men might relax a little in this untiring persistence in hard work and give heed to their delicate bodies which, through their sedentary life, are already somewhat lacking in health and vigour."

Although Rembrandt refused, when he was little more than a boy, to follow the course which, as we have seen, had proved so fatal both to Flemish and Dutch painters of the sixteenth century it was certainly not through any lack of appreciation of the great Italians that he determined to go steadfastly along the path he had marked out for himself. Apart from drawings by his own hand, which prove his admiration for Andrea Mantegna and other great masters of design, he was, throughout his career, an untiring and enthusiastic collector of the work of the great schools of every epoch. The catalogue of his treasures made at the time of his bankruptcy in 1656, which would not, of course, take into

account things even more precious which had been disposed of in the period of his straitened resources immediately preceding the sale of his effects, bears ample witness to the extent of his knowledge and the breadth and liberality of his appreciation. He is therein shown to have been the possessor of what were at any rate accounted at the time original works of Raphael, Palma Vecchio, and Michelangelo, besides complete collections of the engraved plates of Mantegna, Marc Antonio, Albert Dürer, and Holbein, together with numerous woodcuts representing the later eclectic school of the Caracci.

It was most assuredly, therefore, from no lack of admiration for his great predecessors, but rather from an instinctive recognition of the direction and the limitation of his own powers, that Rembrandt took a line of his own that marks a deliberate departure from the tradition of the past. He was, it may be said, the first great painter in modern Europe to create and perfect an ideal in which form and design in the earlier acceptation of those terms played only a subordinate part. The men who preceded him, in whatever land we encounter them, and however widely they differ from one another in many essential respects, are united in their common acknowledgement of these two master qualities that dominated European painting till the close of the sixteenth century. Giorgione and Titian, Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael, Van Eyck and Memling, Dürer and Holbein are all firmly linked together by their acceptance of the supremacy of design. In Venice, it is true, the old allegiance had been partly shaken by the encroaching allurements of colour, and the revolution Venice had begun Rubens afterwards more openly proclaimed. And yet even in Rubens the earlier tradition, though partly shattered, and often sadly distorted, still survives. In the art of Rembrandt it is for the first time definitely and finally discarded. His is no case of a gradual severance from principles first obediently accepted and then insensibly relaxed as his powers matured; from the very outset of his career it was manifest that for him at any rate the earlier language was outworn and that he was des-

tined to adopt a dialect of his own for the interpretation of that new world of spiritual beauty his genius called into being.

In declaring that the elements of Form and Design were destined in Rembrandt's ideal to occupy only a secondary place, it is necessary to define more exactly the special signification which is here attached to these terms. Rembrandt, as all the world knows, was an incomparable master in the use of line, and no one before or since has ever employed the brush, the pencil, or the etching needle with a finer or fuller sense of their capabilities: no one assuredly has shown as a draftsman the same economy of means in the delineation of resident facts of character or in the suggestion of life and movement. But the word "design" in the present connection is intended to convey something more and something different, and is applied to the general scheme of artistic arrangement rather than to the representation of its individual parts. In the work of all the earlier masters whose names have been cited, the balance and harmony of the composition as a whole is established and expressed through the language of line. In Rembrandt these same indispensable qualities are called into existence by means of the opposing forces of light and shade which meet and blend by means at once so subtle and so fugitive that the separate spaces allotted to them are no longer susceptible of rigid demarcation.

And as "design" thus acquires in his art a modified meaning, so also in regard to "form" when we employ the word in reference to Rembrandt it imports a quality wholly different from that which would be implied when it is used in reference to artists like Mantegna, Raphael, or Michelangelo. This difference may best be illustrated by reference to the part played by the human figure in Rembrandt's painting. The physical attributes of man enter as a constant factor into all art that is fully representative of life, and the varying treatment accorded to the external facts of the flesh serves as an unfailing index of the ideal that rules the artist's work. In Florence, as we have already seen, the tendency from the initial experiments of its earliest masters was to evolve from

individual characteristics a settled type that should serve as a perfected vehicle for the message they sought to convey. At a stage in their progress the stream along which they were borne was joined by the confluent waters of classic tradition. The victories of ancient art came to reinforce with fresh authority the results of their own independent researches and in this way was created a settled conception of the human figure to which the verdict of Time has accorded the title of beauty. This same word Beauty is always a perilous term to employ in any dogmatic and exclusive sense, for it is susceptible of no definition however comprehensive that art in its constantly shifting attitude towards nature will bind itself to accept as final or sufficient. The kind of beauty that is appropriate to his own ideal Rembrandt could command in a measure unequalled by any painter before or since, but it none the less remains true that, in the circumscribed meaning that is here attached to it, it was a quality to which his genius had no access. By the claims of the individual, in so far as form is concerned, he remained throughout his career irrevocably bound. His art, where it was concerned with the material facts of human life or the appearances of inanimate nature, was to the end completely dominated and controlled by the spirit of portraiture. It sought no escape from the restraint imposed upon him by the presence of a particular personality or by the concrete facts of a particular scene. He could sometimes invent and would often re-arrange the details of a landscape as he would subordinate or enforce chosen aspects in the character of his sitters, but nothing in this process drew him nearer to that conception of the painters of the South wherein we are made to recognise a constant endeavour to re-mould and re-fashion this "earthly tenement of clay" till it mirrors in harmonious perfection the spirit it enshrines.

This endeavour formed no part of Rembrandt's ambition, and in virtue of what he seeks, no less than of what he discards, he stands forth in this respect as the embodiment of the genius of Northern art. For although with him, as with his lesser comrades of the Northern schools, beauty was

sought as the ultimate reward, the goal was reached by a route that art had not yet travelled; and this becomes abundantly clear when we examine Rembrandt's treatment of the nude and compare his essays in this field with the achievements of the great Italian masters.

Critics and biographers of Rembrandt have debated at length the competing merits of his various essays in the treatment of the human figure. Some of them have claimed pre-eminence for the *Danaë* of St. Petersburg, and others again are disposed to champion the claims of the *Bathsheba* of the Louvre or *The Bather* of the National Gallery; or to pin their faith on individual drawings of nude subjects or on the etched plates of *Diana Bathing* and *The Woman with the Arrow*. It is doubtless true that in this example or in that we may acknowledge a nearer approach to grace of form, but however much in this respect they may differ from one another, it remains true of them all that they stand at even a greater distance from any recognised conception of beauty. Nowhere else in Rembrandt's art is his invincible tendency to portraiture more emphatically announced, and in no other field of invention is the domination of this element so plainly disastrous. It is idle to plead, as certain writers have done, that he was hampered by the defects of his models. The one fatal defect in any picture of the nude that is intended to appeal to the imagination is that we should be reminded of the model, however beautiful or however deformed; and Monsieur Émile Michel gives no more than vehement expression to what every student of Rembrandt must feel when he writes: "Parmi celles qui ont posé pour Rembrandt il en est de tout à fait horribles; le maître copie scrupuleusement leur laideur, sans omettre aucune des déformations que l'âge, les conditions de la vie ou les épreuves de la maternité ont pu leur infliger. Il ne transige pas sur ce point et il n'a pas d'autres pretentions que de faire vrai." Yet, paradoxical as the conclusion may appear, each one of the pictures that are here rightly exposed to criticism contains pictorial qualities of another kind that proclaims it a masterpiece.

And this is so because the tendencies that prove an insuperable obstacle to success in this one direction are found capable in their full development of providing a medium for the most complete expression of his powers. In the fetters that only serve to cripple men of lesser gifts genius moves without restraint; and the very terms of its bondage are transformed as though by magic into a new charter of liberty. In the work of no painter of any school is this truth more triumphantly vindicated than in the case of Rembrandt. For portraiture, under the pressure of his overmastering genius, was forced to provide full scope for the exercise of powers of imaginative vision that have never been surpassed in the story of modern painting. The roll of great portrait painters counts many distinguished names. But in that brilliant company he stands forth as the poet of them all. In comparison with some of the more memorable faces he has preserved for us, convincing in their individuality, yet conveying at the same time a suggestion of something that transcends individual experience, the faces imaged by even the greatest of his comrades seem by comparison to be no more than untenanted masks. In Rembrandt's finer portraits the shell of the flesh forms but the thinnest of veils that divides us from the indwelling spirit, and in the message the spirit conveys to us there is an echo of that inscrutable rhythm of life that only the poet's ear is tuned to capture. It is the presence of this almost indefinable element in Rembrandt's painting that sets it in a category apart. The personality of each chosen subject is firmly marked, but in the final impression of the picture it is already almost forgotten: as we stand enthralled before one of these masterpieces a new enchantment steals upon us: the appeal of the individual is gradually submerged in the larger harmonies the painter has fashioned out of his deeper vision of life as a whole; until at the last we are made to feel that these individual features are no more than a vehicle for the expression of a kind of beauty that is offered as a free gift from the soul of its creator.

So true is this that if there remained of Rembrandt's por-

traiture no more than the fifty odd studies of his own personality his unique place in this branch of the art would still be impregnable. It is here that Rembrandt's larger mission as a portrait painter is most plainly revealed and his power of evoking in a single face the sense of that deeper mystery that envelops our common existence most subtly and most searchingly expressed. We find the artist in these self-portraits frankly and fearlessly confronting himself at almost every stage of his passage through life; and, incredible though it may seem, certain critics have discovered in this fact evidence to support a charge of personal vanity. A measure of self-esteem might, perhaps, be assumed to have inspired the youthful portrait of The Hague, painted when he was little more than twenty years of age, or even the superb bust of the year 1640 in our own National Gallery; but vanity most assuredly plays no part in the uncompromising veracity which distinguishes the picture belonging to Lord Ilchester or in that last record of all from the Neeld Collection, where the travel-stains of the long road the master has trodden already give forewarning that the journey is nearing its end. Here and in other studies of age, notably in The Old Woman of the Hermitage or in that bent figure poring over a book in Lord Pembroke's Gallery, Rembrandt shows himself master of a kind of sentiment wholly unappealing in its pathos and perhaps for that reason the more irresistible. No single emotion, however poignant its utterance, can equal in its influence the message conveyed by these lined and worn faces that enshrine for us the hoarded experience of the vanished years: and most assuredly no power of hand at once so virile and so delicate was ever employed to register the gentle closure of lips grown tremulous with time, the patient gaze of eyes whose fires are spent, or the failing energy of enfeebled hands as they lie softly folded upon one another.

Here may be discovered, I think, the true explanation of these oft-repeated portraits of himself. To satisfy the ideal he had set before him he was led to search and sound the capabilities of expression in the human countenance as a



Hanfstaengl Photo.

St. Petersburg.

THE ARTIST'S MOTHER, BY REMBRANDT VAN RYN

musician explores the resources of an instrument that he has not yet fully tested. And in returning again and again to the study of his own face he chose the instrument that lay nearest to his hand. In all those varied moods in which his creative spirit was most alert — moods the most inspired and sometimes the most fugitive — he was able to verify the truth of his vision without the interposition of any alien countenance. For it is to be noted as widely applicable to Rembrandt's portraiture that it is not diversity of character that he chiefly sought or that remains to us as the most memorable impression. Other men who have practised the art have left a richer record of varied objective personality, but no one has approached him in rendering individual features finely responsive to those deeper moods of feeling he sought to mirror. In this rare quality of vision, perhaps the rarest of which pictorial art is capable, Rembrandt claims kinship with Michelangelo. Under the spell of his genius these Dutch faces become world faces: while the stamp of their place of origin remains undisturbed, the spirit within them, breaking the veil of the flesh, reflects a life that knows no racial or geographical boundaries and conducts us by means too subtle for analysis into the presence of the insoluble mysteries of existence.

It was in direct relation to the pursuit of this ideal that Rembrandt developed and perfected that ethereal garment of light and shade in which he envelops not only his portrait subjects but the more complex compositions of invented drama. By the imperious demands of his temperament he was compelled to an uncompromising realism that he had no power, and perhaps no inclination, to mitigate or modify. But from that world of shadows which he peopled with these unselected types of nature he could summon at will only so much of reality as was needful for the more ideal purpose of his art. In the disposition of these assembled forces of light and shade his sense of form was supreme, and how soon he attained to full mastery in this particular is proved by the faultless beauty of *The Presentation in the Temple* at The Hague, which belongs to the year 1631.



Hanfstaengl Photo.

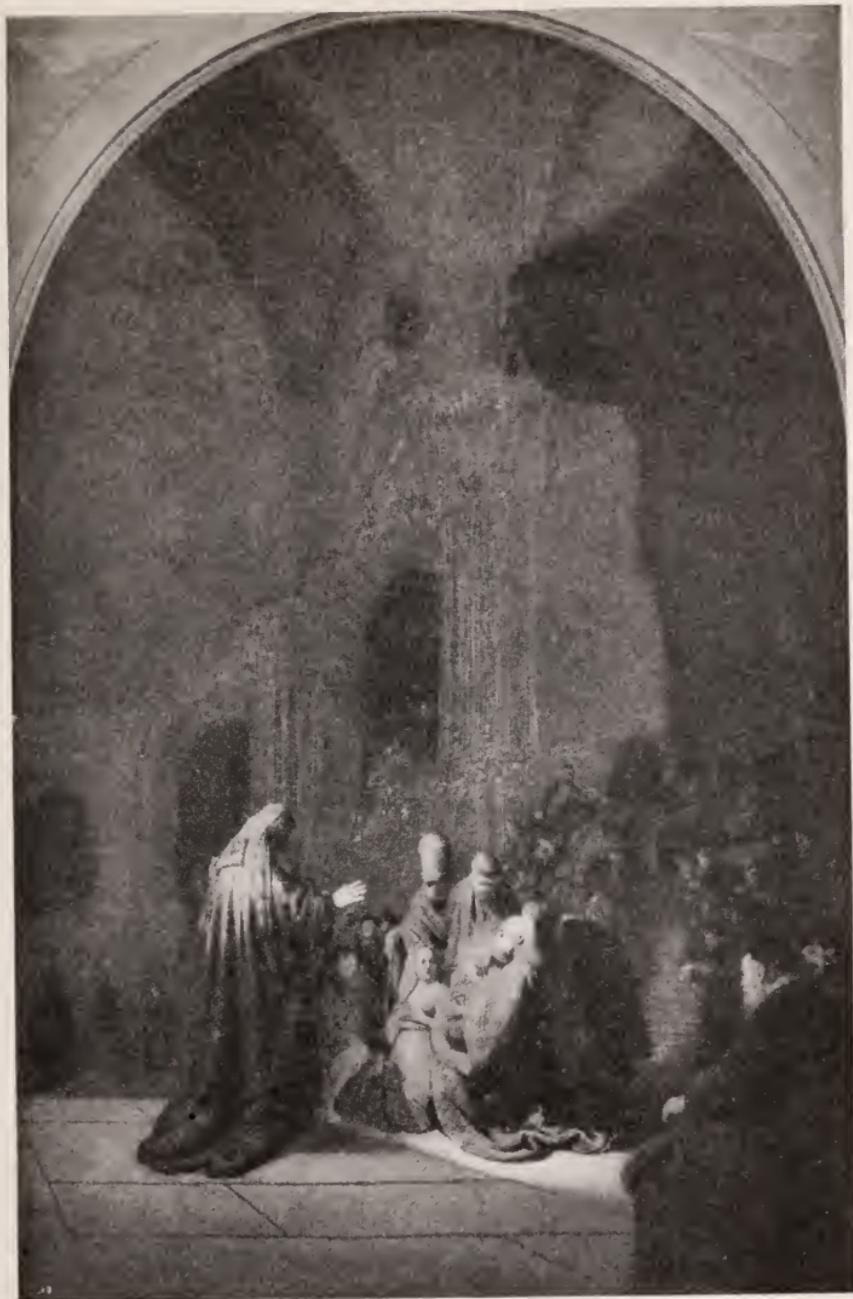
Budapest.

AN OLD RABBI, BY REMBRANDT VAN RYN

Rembrandt's use of tone to emphasise or subdue chosen aspects of his subject has sometimes been described as forced and capricious. In a sense it was both, for it was a means deliberately devised by himself to satisfy the needs of an ideal that was purely personal. In every picture on which he allowed free play to his imagination — and this applies with equal force to portraiture and to themes of invention — it will be found that the system of chiaroscuro we associate with his name comes at once prominently into play. Through the mysterious veil he chooses to establish, accidents of form and incidents of colour retreat and re-appear in obedience to his will; and although the evidence of a searching realism may be traced even in the darkest recesses of shadow, only those parts of the picture are completely revealed upon which the artist desires to concentrate attention.

The depth of tone that Rembrandt employs to enforce his imaginative message is often strangely misinterpreted by those who would deny or deprecate his gifts as a colourist. As a fact no more genuinely inspired colourist has ever wielded the brush, and his mastery in this particular is conclusively established by the perfection with which he can follow a local tint and still preserve its identity under infinite modulations of light and shade. Rembrandt's colour is always living colour, and those who need to be convinced of his unquestionable supremacy in this regard have only to compare him with his elder contemporary, Frans Hals, where colour is sometimes crudely superimposed upon a system of light and shade already established, thus leaving the junction between tone and tint superficial and even mechanical. With Rembrandt, on the other hand, the fusion of these two forces is organic and complete; and as a perfect example of the beauty he thereby achieves we need go no further than the study of Hendrickje Stoffels in the Salon Carré of the Louvre.

This name serves to remind us of the chequered story of Rembrandt's life. We first hear of Hendrickje as a member of his household in the year 1649, seven years after the



Hanfstaengl Photo.

The Hague

SIMON IN THE TEMPLE, BY REMBRANDT VAN RYN

death of his wife Saskia. Rembrandt, the son of a miller at Leyden, had passed the earlier years of his life in his native town. Orlers, a contemporary historian, has left an interesting account of the circumstances of his boyhood. It was at first intended by his father that he should become a student of the University at Leyden with a view to his ultimate adoption of the legal profession. But for this career, as Orlers expresses it, "he showed neither desire nor inclination, seeing that his natural tendencies were all in the direction of the art of painting and design; wherefore his parents felt themselves compelled to take their son from the school and, in accordance with his desires, to place him with a painter that he might learn from the latter the first principles and beginnings of his art." With his first master he served for three years and with his second, Lasman, no more than six months when, as our chronicler expresses it: "he thought it good to open up and to practise the painter's art alone and on his own resources and in this he has so well succeeded that he has become one of the most renowned painters of our age. As his art and his manner of work greatly pleased the inhabitants of Amsterdam and as he was often urged to execute portraits and other works in that city, he found it good to transport himself from Leyden to Amsterdam and accordingly he departed from here about the year 1630 and took up his abode yonder where he still resides in this year 1641."

Huygens' reference to this period of experiment and early endeavour has already been quoted; and the precocity of his talent is clearly established by the fact that in the year 1632 he completed *The Lesson in Anatomy* that now hangs in The Hague. It was two years after he had finally taken up his quarters in Amsterdam that he married Saskia, the youngest daughter of Rombertus Van Uylenburch, a Frisian lawyer whose family, we may assume, enjoyed a social position superior to that of the painter. The seven years of married life that followed were among the most prosperous of his career, and at the close of this period he completed *The Night Watch*, a picture the world has agreed to reckon

as the most celebrated of his productions, though there will always be those among his admirers who will set *The Syndics* of twenty years later on even a higher plane.

In the period that followed Saskia's death gathering shadows that deepened with the passing years lend a certain sense of sadness to the story of his later life. Some measure of spiritual isolation he must always have endured. Genius so great as his, as it lifts him above his fellows, creates its own loneliness. There was no one in the school of which he is the head who could share his higher imaginative outlook or even fully comprehend the ideal that with such untiring experiment he sought to perfect. This is the penalty that must needs be paid by the few who are peerless. But it is not in itself sufficient to account for the neglect he suffered in these years both socially and professionally. A part of this neglect was manifestly due to failings in his own nature, and what remains must be ascribed to the shifting taste of the time which doubtless viewed with increasing disfavour the special development his art was destined to take. Rembrandt's own shortcomings are not in dispute. His irregular relations with Hendrickje served to alienate some of his staunchest friends; and his financial troubles were, it may be fairly assumed, no less potent in their unfavourable influence upon former patrons. This is not the place to follow in detail either one or the other. Rembrandt's was essentially a home-loving nature and some such companionship as that which Hendrickje supplied became to him an almost indispensable condition of his life. It has been urged, perhaps on insufficient evidence, that he and Hendrickje were, in law as well as in fact, actually man and wife, but the opposite hypothesis finds support in the terms of Saskia's will, whereby on his re-marriage he would be forced to sacrifice a part of the fortune she had bequeathed to him. A tendency to extravagance in matters of personal expenditure is confirmed by contemporary records of the sometimes reckless manner in which he sought to satisfy his taste as a collector. But even what we know of his large earnings in the more fortunate years of his work is difficult to reconcile

with his bankruptcy in 1656 and the consequent poverty of his declining days. It seems, on the other hand, likely enough that as the message he sought to deliver became increasingly incomprehensible to his generation the claims of that group of Genre painters for whose success he was partly responsible began to appeal more strongly to the connoisseurs of the time. Rembrandt's mastery as a craftsman could never have been in question, as is sufficiently proved by his great picture of *The Syndics*, completed in 1662, but the manner of interpretation is here in some sense a reversion to an earlier style; and other pictures of his later life, as they tended to develop the ideal he had at heart, may well have served to divert the expert opinion of his contemporaries to those always skilful and always intelligible transcripts of social life that his pupils and followers were throwing upon the market.

Attempts have sometimes been made to trace in different stages of Rembrandt's art a reflection of the vicissitudes of his life, but such attempts only serve to reveal a complete misconception of the higher forms of imaginative creation. It is only mediocrity that seeks to set its own sorrows to music: genius leaves upon the very threshold of the world its spirit inhabits all memory of experiences purely personal to itself. Its vision probes too deeply into the lives of others to be greatly concerned with its own: for it is sympathy that supplies the motive power of all great creative achievement, sympathy so overwhelming and absorbing as to completely banish from the realm of art every vestige of the kind of egotism that we may sometimes trace in the work of men of inferior endowment. The circumstances that brought misfortune to Rembrandt doubtless cast upon him as a man a corresponding measure of suffering, but the evidence of his art goes to prove that, despite of such suffering, he advanced, with no halt and with no dissipation of his energy, towards that goal from which his gaze was never diverted while he lived and laboured.

Certain aspects of Rembrandt's genius can only be rightly appreciated in Holland itself, for no reproduction of work

like *The Lesson in Anatomy*, *The Night Watch*, and *The Syndics* can convey any adequate idea of their merits. England, however, possesses a wealth of material in the shape of single portraits, and it is in these single portraits, although the statement may seem at the first glance paradoxical, that his imaginative powers find supreme expression. To prove that these powers remained undiminished to the very end of his career we need go no further than our own National Gallery. Besides the incomparable likeness of himself already noticed, we have the older self-portrait of 1659 and the *Portrait of an Old Lady* ascribed to the year 1661.

His principal rivals in this branch of the art, if indeed rivals they can rightly be called, are Frans Hals and Van der Helst: the first his senior by nearly a generation and the second his junior by no more than six years. For the study of both the student must perforce journey to Holland itself. Nor is advocacy greatly needed to enforce the claims of the second of these two masters. His appeal, however powerful, is simple and direct. There are no characteristics of his painting which he does not share with other artists of his time and school, though there is, perhaps, no single example from any one of them that can be said to rival in the fullness of its resources Van der Helst's great picture of *The Banquet of the Civic Guard* of the museum at Amsterdam. It is far otherwise with Frans Hals, who announces with a force that is sometimes aggressive a distinctive personality which sets him in a separate category. His gifts of characterisation are marked by a vigour and variety that are truly astonishing. On entering the gallery devoted to his work at Haarlem the visitor cannot fail to be struck with amazement at the restless energy with which this motley throng clamours for recognition. It seems for the moment as though the sudden intrusion of a stranger had brought to abrupt silence an animated debate. The faces assembled upon the walls would appear to be competing for the prize of vivacity. Confident of their vitality they want to be equally assured that the spectator also recognises and acknowledges it; and to this end every face and the separate features of every



Hanfstaengl Photo.

Vienna.

WILLIAM VAN HUYTHUSEN, BY FRANS HALS

face are almost vociferously employed in the business of expression. From this first sense of wonderment we awake to the conviction that each individual subject of Hals' portraiture takes its place upon the canvas as though he had been clearly forewarned of the approach of the master and had set himself deliberately to the task of proving to his interpreter that he is a living and sentient being. The fact is indeed established beyond all danger of denial and yet it must be conceded that the message is sometimes exaggerated and overcharged. The appeal of the fleeting moment is so insistently urged as to exclude almost all suggestion of that life before and after which the supreme achievements in portraiture never fail to convey. If painting, to quote the fortunate words of the poet Campbell, "steals but one glance at Time," Hals is at any rate clearly determined that the hurried record it carries away shall not lack emphasis; and although he forbids our thoughts to wander beyond the four corners of the frame, he feverishly presses into this allotted space all that it can be made to contain.

The sense of movement both in the carriage of the figure and the expression of the countenance which Hals introduces into portraiture with such telling effect is an indispensable ingredient of all the greatest art, whatever the theme whereon it is employed. But there is one unfailing sign that serves to mark the very highest accomplishment in this direction, and for this we sometimes seek in vain even in the most notable of Hals' achievements. With the few supreme masters who have fully fathomed the secret whereby truth of action may be rendered by the means at the disposal of the painter, nothing is more noticeable than the growing restraint which unfailingly accompanies the enlargement of their resources. Increasing power is proved by an increasing reticence in its employment, and this reveals itself in a growing preference for those subtler facts of gesture and action that mirror the rhythmic flow of life as yet unpledged to the call of any particular emotion. Frans Hals has little of this modesty that is, indeed, inseparable from mastery. The personages he passes in review strut and



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Wallace Coll., London.

THE LAUGHING CAVALIER, BY FRANS HALS

swagger and smile and grimace at us as though this were their sole mission in life. And although he has left many admirable portraits that make a deeper and more serious appeal, the defect is characteristic and serves often as the foundation for an exaggerated estimate of his place among the great portrait painters Europe has produced. For those who would place him on this higher level are apt to confuse the exuberant display of such gifts as he undoubtedly possessed with the deeper and more delicate appreciation of character that makes a less intemperate demand upon our admiration. Vulgarity is a harsh word to apply to any artist so greatly endowed as Hals, and yet it can hardly be denied that in some of the examples of his portraiture that are most loudly acclaimed there may be detected a lack of taste that argues imperfect spiritual vision.

A sufficient reason why the student of Hals must journey to Holland, and more particularly to Haarlem, is that only in the city that was his home for upwards of fifty-five years can we judge of his remarkable powers of composition. In the art of associating upon equal terms a number of forms and faces none of whose owners were disposed to accept a subordinate position, Hals had certainly no superior among his contemporaries or his successors. The difficulty of the task was plainly felt by all of those who were engaged upon these Corporation pictures. In the case of *The Night Watch* Rembrandt deliberately broke away from the terms of his commission and, permitting himself full licence in the handling of his material, created a masterpiece which, if it failed to satisfy the demands of his immediate patrons, has survived in virtue of its artistic qualities as a delight for all future time. Hals had never this higher triumph in view, and perhaps for that reason the inherent difficulties of the problem oppressed him less. It is certain at least that his facility in surmounting them is extraordinary. Nor was the result reached by any tedious process of experiment. There are in all eight of these portrait groups at Haarlem, and even in the earliest of them,—*The Banquet of St. Joris' Shooting Guild*,—executed in 1616 when he was

about thirty-five years of age, he already confronts his task with ease and assurance. Eleven years elapsed before Hals' second experiment in this class of subject, and still later we have the groups of 1633 and 1639. But although in characterisation and in technical dexterity there is evidence of consistent and continued advance, the first essay more than holds its own in general force of presentment.

Of the professors of the art of portraiture who, during their earlier years at any rate, worked in immediate subordination to Rembrandt, it is not here possible to speak in any detail. Some of them, like Ferdinand Bol, Govaert Flinck, and Eckhout, successfully reproduced certain of the master's characteristics; but in the work of none of them when their own individuality asserts itself is there anything that constitutes an independent contribution to the ideals of the Dutch School.

The Genre painters of the period tell a somewhat different story. Though they one and all confess the influence of Rembrandt there are not a few who bring to their work gifts of a kind that serve to distinguish them not only from their immediate associates but from the master himself. And in this more select company Jan Steen and Jan Vermeer stand supreme. Rembrandt's researches into the problems of light remained as the common inheritance of all who followed him; and this new spring of beauty his genius had set free flows into each separate channel that marks the course of Dutch painting during the seventeenth century. It may be clearly identified in the work of the two painters whose names have been just cited: its presence is even more emphatically announced in painters like Nicolas Maes, Pieter de Hooch, Gerard Dou, and even Gerard Terborch, whose lesser powers of creative invention left them free to concentrate their energies upon the development of the technical side of their art.

As between Jan Steen and Vermeer a superior power of vision lifting them clearly above their fellows forms the sole link of connection. In respect of almost every quality, technical or spiritual, that art can summon to its service no

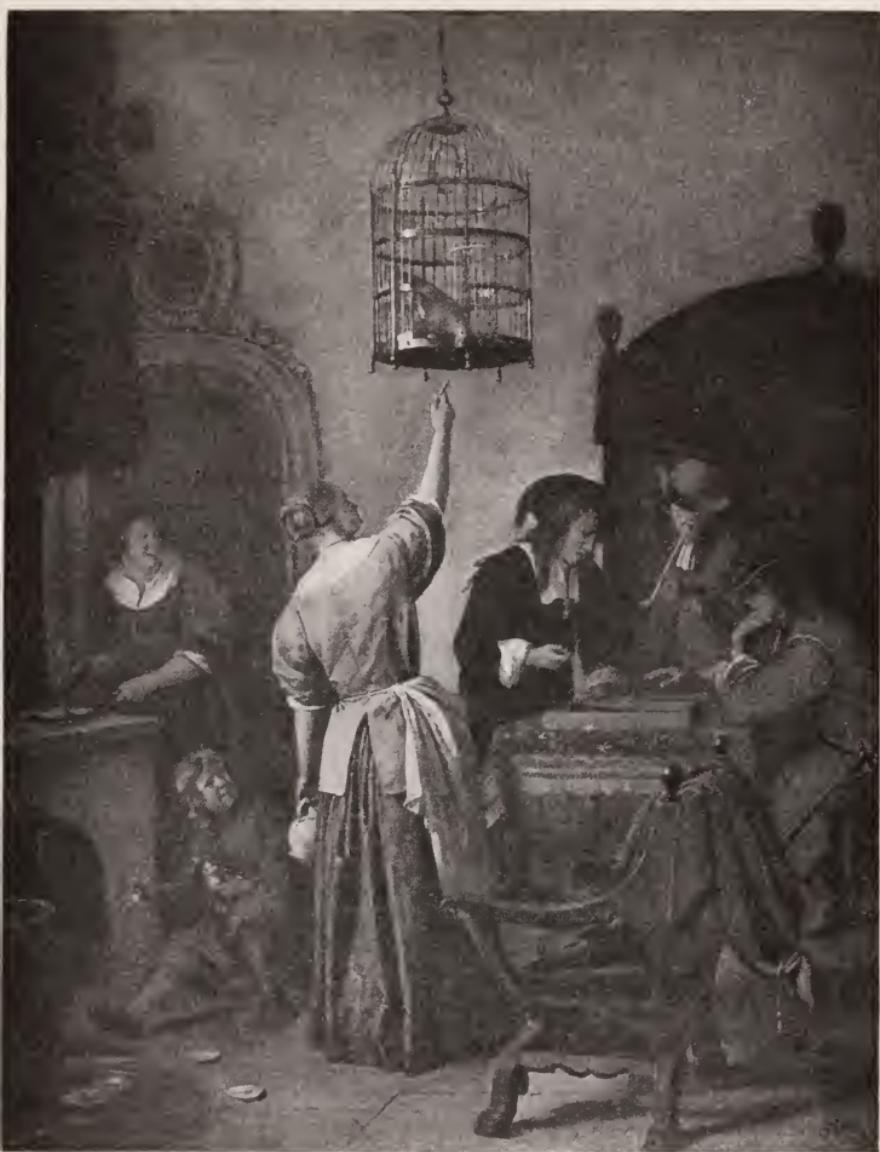
two men could be more sharply contrasted. Within the limited arena in which his invention finds exercise Jan Steen is the greatest narrative painter any modern school has produced; while Vermeer, to whom the anecdotic qualities of the chosen subject made scarce any appeal at all, proved himself the possessor of certain qualities of style in the rendering of form combined with an insight into the more delicate subtleties of expression that serve to give him an unique place in the Dutch school.

Jan Steen, of whose life so little is known, has been the victim of gossip and rumour that seem to rest on no firm foundation; and the unfavourable portrait of him that emerges from this tangled web of tradition would appear on analysis to have no stronger warrant than that provided by the well-worn analogy that he who drives fat oxen must himself be fat. Because he painted scenes of low life it appears to be assumed that his own tastes and pursuits were sordid and disreputable. He shows us the riot of the tavern and mirrors with incomparable power the life of the drunkard, and on this evidence — for there is little more that is definitely ascertained — it is assumed that he was a sot whose days were passed in debauchery. Such charges in their grosser form are scarcely consistent with the often exquisite quality of his work and the sustained industry that must have been needed to satisfy his prodigal invention; and even if he is to be judged by the record supplied in his pictures, it must not be forgotten that side by side with his masterly presentment of the more brutal aspects of the life of the time are to be found scenes of domestic felicity and of the innocent frolics of childhood that are interpreted with an unsurpassed delicacy and refinement.

It was neither his fault nor his misfortune that Jan Steen with the brush in his hand had always a story to tell. At sound of his approach the careless throng that peopled the little world over which he held sway fell into their allotted places in the drama prepared for them. They are gathered on his canvas, not in obedience to any abstract laws of artistic grace and fitness, but as selected exponents of the social

life of their time. Related to one another by ties that are independent of any canons of the schools, they leave it to the force and finesse of their creator to justify their pictorial existence. Jan Steen never fails them. The language of painting came to him as his native tongue; and if he chose to shoulder burdens under which artists less gifted have often staggered and fallen, it was because he was fully conscious of his own powers to comply with the inherent conditions which painting imposes. His final challenge to the world is a painter's challenge: he asks for no mercy on the grounds of the interest and attractions of his story; and he needs none, for his practice only demonstrates afresh a truth to which the whole history of painting bears witness, that the finest qualities of a purely artistic kind are only generated under the pressure of ideas that seek for utterance.

Modern criticism, which has been tutored to despise the narrative functions of art, has been disposed to look askance at the genius of Jan Steen. So many failures have been incurred and have been condoned on the plea that the artist had a notable theme to illustrate that it has been perversely assumed that the mischief has been wrought by the intrusion of the theme and not by the incompetence of its interpreter. The most superficial examination of only a few of Jan Steen's masterpieces must render any such conclusion ridiculous. As we pass with him from subject to subject we may see how rich in the region of pure art were the discoveries of beauty his inexhaustible invention provoked. In facial expression even Hals' brilliant achievement seems by comparison almost crude and rudimentary, while in his apprehension of certain qualities of grace in form, in the faultless seizure of motives in action at once both simple and significant, he has scarcely a rival in his own or any other school. Turn, for instance, to the well-known picture of *The Parrot's Cage* at Amsterdam, where these perfections are most happily combined. What can be finer in its separate appeal than the carriage of the younger woman's figure as with one arm uplifted she holds a tempting morsel to the bird that half timidly bends from the threshold of its



Medici Bruckmann Photo.

Amsterdam.

THE PARROT'S CAGE, BY JAN STEEN

cage, while the left hand which grasps a pitcher falls loosely by her side. And then note the interested consent of expression in the face of the boy who sits at her feet and of the elder woman who turns from her occupation at the stove to watch the little comedy as it proceeds; and then let the eye pass to the unconcern of the two backgammon players to the right of the composition, wholly intent upon their game, in the progress of which the onlooker thoughtfully smoking his pipe is equally absorbed. A dozen other instances might be cited where, apart from its fitting contribution to the drama in which it takes part, some single figure appeals to us in right of its perfect embodiment of beauty both of form and of movement. The two female figures who occupy the centre of the composition in *The Fête of the Prince of Orange*, the lady sitting at a table in *The Physician's Visit* at Munich, the laughing woman who leans back in her chair in *A Merry Company* at Amsterdam, and the group of mother and child in the *Grace Before Meat* that formed part of the late Mr. Morrison's collection, may each one of them be withdrawn from its context and be offered in convincing vindication of Jan Steen's ability to compete with any of his fellows in respect of qualities that need no support from the legend under illustration.

With such proof before us that despite his excursions into narrative or drama Jan Steen is rarely betrayed into any violation of the conditions pictorial art imposes we may enjoy without misgiving the wonderful prodigality of his inventive powers. Jan Steen never turned his back on life, however grim or terrible its visage. Where humanity led the way he was ever willing to follow, scanning the dark recesses of existence into which he so often wandered with a searching gaze that knew neither indulgence nor resentment. And if we are occasionally tempted to think that he dwelt with seeming preference upon the more sordid of the facts that came under his observation, we are at once shaken in our censure as memory recalls not one but many examples that show in him a spirit equally accessible to the saner and sweeter influences of human feeling. No one whose finer

perceptions had been blunted or destroyed could have painted the family group of the artist and his wife with their



Medici Bruckmann Photo.

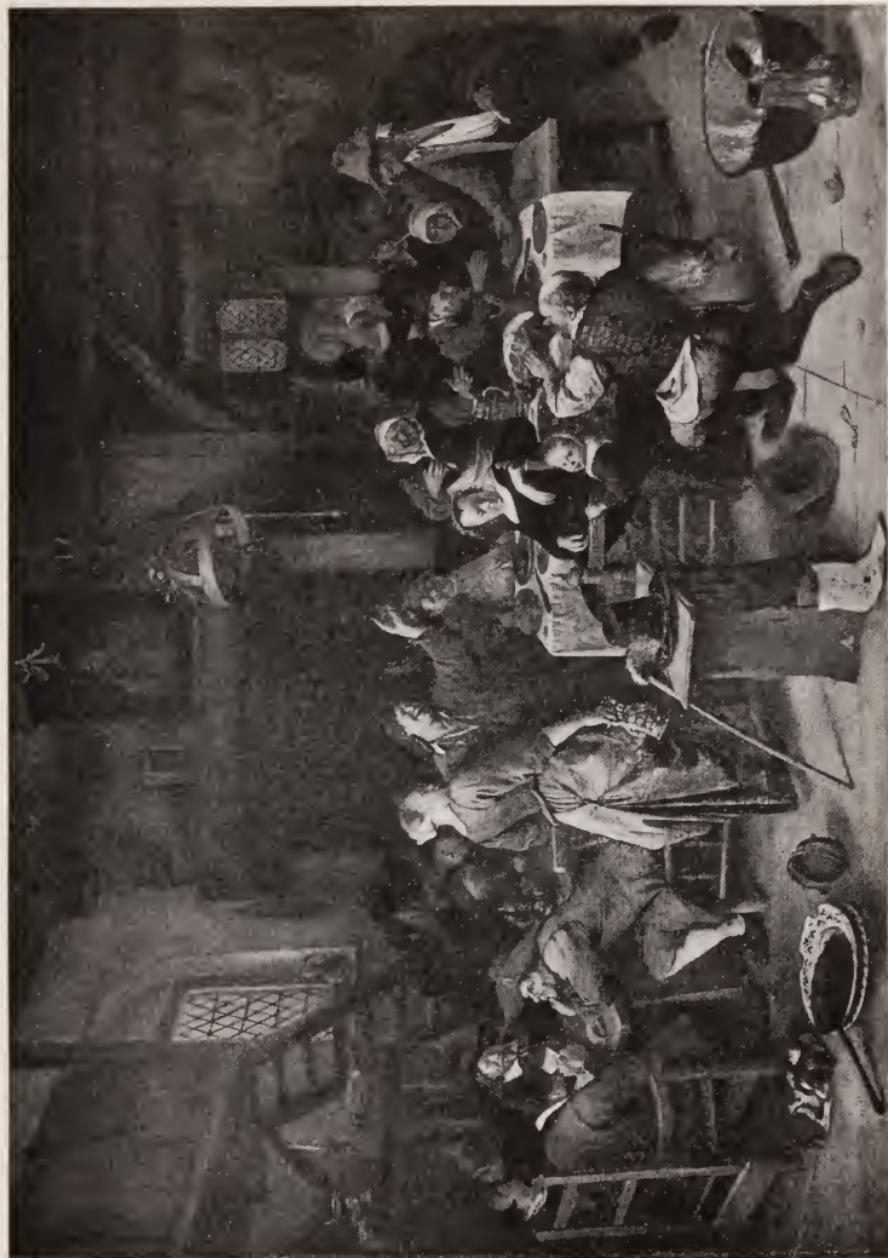
Amsterdam.

THE FEAST OF ST. NICOLAS, BY JAN STEEN

little boy in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, *The Cat's Dancing Lesson* at Amsterdam, or that other *Grace Before Meat* in our own National Gallery. The woman's

figure in the last-named picture as she stands in momentary pause with the spoon balanced over the earthenware pipkin, while the child on the opposite side of the table, its little hands joined together, repeats its well-learnt lesson, is worthy of Vermeer, in its complete absorption in the task of the moment and in the message of pictorial grace it conveys. Or to take another single figure, the little girl in *The Feast of St. Nicolas*, who laughingly breaks away from her mother's outstretched arms, as they are extended in affectionate invitation, might have been designed with the special purpose of demonstrating to the spectator that whatever might have been the outward habit of Jan Steen's life the imaginative sensibilities of the artist remained unimpaired.

Jan Steen as a faithful chronicler of scenes of social life has been compared with our English Hogarth. But, although in the courage with which they faced reality even in its more repellent forms they have much in common, their point of view is not exactly identical. In nearly all his work Hogarth frankly owned the mission of a moralist, and it was only in the pursuit of his didactic purpose that he was overtaken by the larger and more insistent claims of the artist — claims his innate genius rendered irresistible. This ethical impulse that serves as the spur to his invention sometimes mars the complete unity of the final impression. The poet and the painter have not completely ousted the formulated message of the teacher and the satirist, and the result betrays the existence of a kind of conflict that art in its more perfected forms does not acknowledge. In Jan Steen we discover little trace of this divided allegiance. Life as it revealed itself to his vision was the sole incentive that he needed, though, in virtue of the concentrated intensity with which he penetrated to the heart of his subject he sometimes reached a result that lashes the follies of the world with a power that deliberate satire fails to rival. With a sinister force that is almost terrible in its exercise, Jan Steen in his picture of *The Drunken Couple* at Amsterdam has realised a picture of debauchery that the English master might eagerly have claimed for his own. And yet, apart from the grim



Medici Brückmann Photo.

A DUTCH REVEL, BY JAN STEEN

Amsterdam.

message it conveys, it has beauties of design and expression that no one but Jan Steen could extract from so unlikely a theme. Who else but he could have grouped these two central figures in such a faultless composition, and what other master could have expressed with such delicate resource the stupor of the drunken woman from whose inert fingers the pipe she has been smoking is slipping downwards to the floor, while her viler companion in his besotted ecstasy has still strength enough to hold the newly filled glass over her recumbent form.

As I have already hinted, Jan Steen is not greatly beloved in the more orthodox ranks of art criticism. His vigorous individuality, refusing to be cooped within the confines imposed by any pedantic system of classification, is disconcerting to those timorous souls who are shy of acknowledging any perfection not clearly referable to canons of taste already proved and accepted. But genius so great as his will always force recognition. Out of those very qualities of invention whose presence in art is adjudged to be questionable, he has evolved new beauties that belong exclusively to the painter's domain. Even if a time should come when the drama he loved to expound wholly failed in its message, the form into which he has thrown it would remain, in a purely artistic sense, imperishable and incomparable. The envelope in which it is folded would still be found to have beauty enough, even though the letter it once contained were lost or destroyed. As a draftsman in all that is subtly expressive of character and emotion; as a master of composition who was ever finding new patterns of design, he stands absolutely alone among the painters of the Dutch school; and even as a colourist when he is judged at his best, and no great artist will tolerate any other standard of criticism — he makes an appeal that is wholly individual and independent. No man out of the volume of his invention has produced so many motives in the rendering of form and expression which, while they proclaim their attachment to the ideas that inspire them, become, by right of sheer beauty, the inalienable property of the art in which they appear.

In passing to the work of Jan Vermeer we enter another and a different world. Vermeer never sought and never needed the support of any particular legend. Life in its simplest and most primitive appeal was all-sufficing and absorbing; and in his tranquil pursuit of the more delicate realities of character his power of seizing upon that which is habitual and inevitable in action and gesture is unerring. In this respect he claims kinship with the great Italians, sometimes even reminding us of Raphael himself in that matchless gift the great master of Urbino possessed of conferring upon things intimate and familiar an indefinable suggestion of the epical and the universal. In the presence of almost any one of Vermeer's single figures — and it is in the treatment of single figures that the noblest attributes of his art are revealed — whether the subject be a maid who pours milk from one vessel into another or a woman who pauses as with head slightly inclined she bends to read a letter, or yet again a girl who stands before a mirror as she adjusts a string of beads around her throat — we are made to feel that in this and in no other way must such simple offices have been discharged since time began. And as we withdraw our gaze from any one of these figures it is with the confident assurance that in the unending sequence of movements whereof this alone has been selected, there will be none that may not claim a kindred quality of essential and elemental beauty.

If we contrast Vermeer's paintings with even the greatest of those who laboured by his side his supremacy in this regard must be instantly conceded. The men and women who inhabit De Hooch's exquisite interiors seem by comparison lifeless and inert. Life indeed there is in the ambient sunlit air that envelops and enfolds them, but it fails to communicate itself to these individual forms and faces that rank scarcely higher than the things of still life as agents for conveying the painter's delicate sense of those infinite gradations of tone it is his mission to interpret. The beauty that belongs to imprisoned sunlight is the peculiar possession of the Dutch Genre painters of the seventeenth century.



Medici Bruckmann Photo.

Frankfort.

THE ASTRONOMER, BY JAN VERMEER

Even where in the treatment of the human figure they fall short of the impression of complete vitality that Vermeer and Jan Steen never miss, they rarely fail in this. The atmosphere that surcharges these veiled interiors, lit by a direct ray of sunshine that falls from the window or sobered in shadow travels into the darker recesses of the chamber, always vibrates with the pulse of life, though its incidence on human forms and faces may reveal no corresponding animation in their gesture and movement.

In Vermeer and in Vermeer alone these twin elements of beauty meet in perfect alliance. He seeks no strong accents in the treatment of light and shade, for his eye is on the alert for truths of form and expression that require neither emphasis nor concealment. In cool corridors unadorned by needless accessories of furniture or decoration, or in apartments into which the light steals with an even flow that scarcely announces its presence, he awaits the simple subjects of his study as they move across the scene in unconscious serenity. If they halt it is not upon his demand, for the subtle processes of his art leave them free to pursue their own occupations unconcerned. He has no drama to unfold, no story to tell, save that which is inseparable from a conception of human life as yet undisturbed by emotion. The range of his vision is, therefore, to that extent restricted, but the few incidents he admits into the arena of his art are interpreted with so much subtlety and significance that the little world his spirit is content to inhabit becomes insensibly enlarged until it suggests something of the deeper mystery of life itself. And the methods by which he wrests from the simpler elements of existence this essential secret of its being leave him among his contemporaries in the Dutch school altogether peerless and incomparable. He steals upon nature unawares, following in her footsteps with a tread so silent and so stealthy that the quarry is captured almost before the fowler's net is spread.

Vermeer's works are not numerous, and those that bear his name or are rightly assigned to him are not always characteristic. That he was destined, however, to pur-



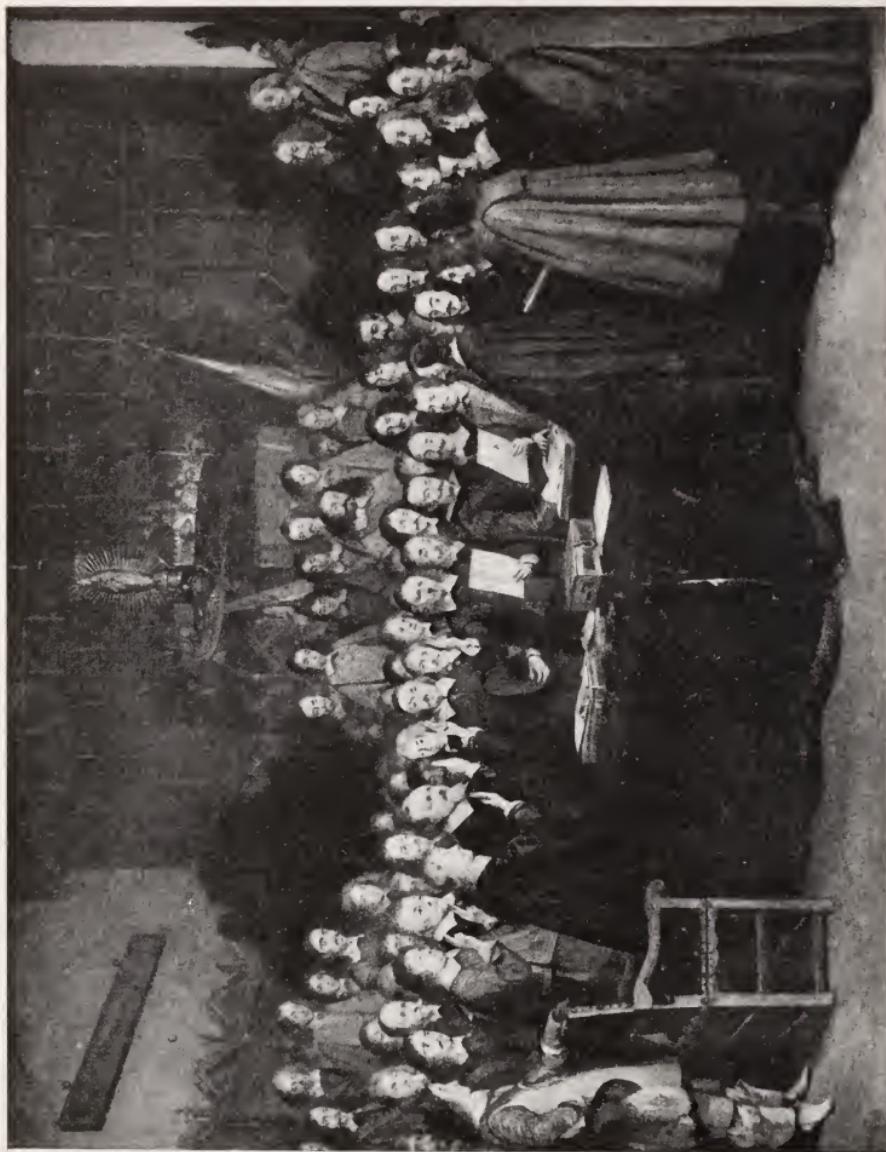
Hanfstaengl Photo.

Royal Gallery, Berlin.

YOUNG WOMAN WITH PEARL NECKLACE, BY JAN VERMEER

sue a path of his own is clearly indicated at an early point in his career. The picture of *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* in the collection of Mr. Coats, unquestionably belonging to the season of his youth, already gives promise in the contrasted expression upon the faces of the two women of the delicate perfection he afterwards attained. But to judge him at his best, to apprehend rightly the qualities wherein he stands supreme, we must turn to those single figures of smaller scale, such as *The Astronomer* at Frankfort, *The Lace Maker* of the Louvre, *The Milkmaid*, or the *Girl writing a Letter* both at Amsterdam, or to the *Lady Writing* in the Pierpont Morgan Collection in New York.

The representation of life falls to a lower level in the hands even of the most eminent of the contemporaries of Jan Steen and Vermeer. It seems scarcely credible now, and yet the fact is established beyond dispute that during the eighteenth century the names both of Pieter de Hooch and Metzu were attached to Vermeer's pictures in order to enhance their price in the market. The beautiful qualities of De Hooch's paintings stand in no danger of neglect, but in respect of this one magic quality of life, his efforts, compared to those of Vermeer, might almost be said to rank as the faltering experiments of a child. Many of the forms he creates fall still-born upon the canvas, and such vitality as they possess is borrowed from the atmosphere in which they are bathed. Metzu and Mieris and even Terborch, the superior of both, whatever their executive triumphs, show in greater or less degree a failing grasp of that expressive quality that is never absent from the painting of Vermeer and Jan Steen. Terborch's *Peace of Münster* in the National Gallery, a miracle of patient portraiture that is truly astounding in its manipulative skill and in its careful differentiation of character, misses the magic of life that Jan Steen contrives to convey even in the roughest of his paintings of Genre. In other examples of Terborch's work there may be noted an increasing stress upon the lifeless accessories of the design, a growing inclination to depend upon triumphs of executive skill, tendencies that reach the limit of their development in the



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

THE PEACE OF MÜNSTER, BY GERARD TERBORCH

National Gallery, London.

art of Gerard Dou, who, though he was for three years a pupil in Rembrandt's studio, reveals scarcely a trace of the larger influence of the master's genius.

Gerard Dou's minor perfections, which embody for the superficial observer the main characteristics of Dutch Genre painting, have qualities that naturally endear him to a certain class of connoisseurs and ensure his unchallenged position as the cherished idol of the picture-dealer. His mastery is of a kind that cannot be missed: his miniature-like finish, the smooth and polished surfaces of panels filled and furnished with every detail of still life, require no great artistic insight for their full appreciation. A painter who can lavish upon the physiognomy of a cabbage the loving care and devotion that a Florentine would have reserved for the face of a Madonna will never lack admirers; but when we turn to more essential qualities it must be conceded that Dou's art touched the lowest point consistent with these undisputed perfections. Nicolas Maes, the second of Rembrandt's accredited pupils, appeals to a worthier standard. The premeditated pathos of some of his aged figures fails to touch the deeper springs of emotion that Rembrandt awakens, but they are invariably marked by a serious dignity of style that proves his sympathy with the loftier qualities of Rembrandt's art. Genre painting found many other exponents among the Dutch artists of the seventeenth century whose claims do not admit of particular consideration in an essay that is concerned only with larger and broader tendencies of style. Their work will be found to lean alternately either to the anecdotic, of which Jan Steen was the leading exponent, or to the interpretation of the life of the citizen or the peasant as it came under their daily observation. To the former class belong Adriaen Brouwer, a master of humorous invention whose finer work is only to be found at Munich, Adriaen Van Ostade, and David Teniers; for although Teniers belongs by right of birth to Flanders, his art naturally finds its place beside that of his Dutch contemporaries.

The landscape painting of the Dutch School was as dis-



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

SAYING GRACE, BY NICOLAS MAES

tinguished and characteristic as its work in portraiture or in Genre. The secrets of light and shade which Rembrandt's genius had been the first to fathom, led to fresh developments in all forms of pictorial representation. In illustrating the social life of the time, as it is depicted in the guarded tranquillity of the home or in the gaiety and riot of the tavern, the painter's appreciation of the subtleties of atmospheric truth had operated, as we have already seen, with an influence that was magical. But side by side with these students of contemporary manners, were others equally gifted, who, not content with capturing the beauty of imprisoned sunlight, carried their researches into the larger and freer arena provided by the facts of the external world.

Under the stress of these newly awakened impulses Dutch landscape came into being, and with the special purpose that inspired their efforts, no country could have served them better than their own. The large spaces of uneventful land stretching to a low horizon that leaves the forces of the air in undisputed possession of the scene, offered incomparable material to an art that was less concerned with permanent facts of form and colour than with the ever-varying and fugitive effects of light and shade. In developing this branch of the art therefore, Dutch painters were assisted rather than retarded by the monotonous character of Dutch scenery, and their modern successors, who have accepted the domination of tone as the supreme factor in landscape composition, are therefore found constantly resorting by choice to the kind of material that nature imposed upon the painters of Holland.

In speaking of Rembrandt as the pioneer of the movement it is not suggested that the elements of beauty to which he gave enlarged expression had, before his time, been wholly unperceived or unappreciated. More than a century had elapsed since Titian had given to Venice the first glimpse of that new beauty his genius drew down to earth from the overhanging canopy of the changeful sky; and the note he had been the first to sound was afterwards re-echoed in the landscape of Rubens who carried the message of Venice,



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

DUTCH INTERIOR, BY PIETER DE HOOCH

in respect of colour and tone, to the later schools of Northern Europe.

We know, of course, that Rembrandt was familiar with the work of Rubens, and we may be assured that this particular quality in his landscape did not escape him. His art, which dwelt with ever increasing concentration upon the mysteries of light and shade, would certainly not ignore or neglect the great achievement in the same direction of his older contemporary in Flanders. Yet, when full account has been taken of his debt to Rubens, and of the influence of Elsheimer, whose place in art the newer criticism is sometimes in danger of exaggerating, Rembrandt remains as the greatest originator in the treatment of landscape that modern Europe has produced. For the qualities which gave supreme distinction to his work in portraiture reappear with equal force in his rendering of Nature. He is as completely bound by the formal features of the individual scene as by the physiognomy of the living model. In obedience to tradition he sometimes borrowed from others or invented for himself those facts out of which he constructed the backgrounds of his mythological or religious subjects. He occasionally exhibits the same tendency even in the region of pure landscape, as in *The Ruin on the Hill* at Cassel, a composition that is directly reminiscent of the classical spirit of his great contemporary, Claude Lorraine; but the beauty which he sought and revealed in Nature was nevertheless, in its essence, independent of form in the earlier acceptations of the term. Almost any scene that accident might offer, however mean its material and however humble its appeal, sufficed for his purposes. The spiritual charm that was his to withhold or to confer was independent of the incidents of reality: it was a message from the soul of the artist that Nature even in its most rebel mood was forced to convey to the eye and the mind of the beholder.

Rembrandt's painted landscapes are few, but *The Mill*, that formed a part of Lord Lansdowne's collection at Bowood, would alone suffice to establish the highest claims put forward on his behalf. The austere simplicity of the theme,



THE MILL, BY REMBRANDT VAN RYN

with the mill building, in naked outline, uplifted upon a bastioned mound of earth overlooking the tranquil stream, is robed by Rembrandt's genius in all the majesty and the mystery that gather round the smouldering fires of sunset. The separate facts of the scene — the figures only dimly discerned in the shadowed foreground, the motionless boat with its prow sharply relieved against the burnished surface of the water, and the distant trees upon the opposite bank that stand as though held in trance by the beauty of their own reflection — serve only as so many notes in that larger melody the painter has drawn from the very heart of Nature. We are conscious that the whispered voice which here first finds utterance through the musing spirit of the great Dutchman has travelled far and has still far to travel, bearing this self-same message to the dwellers in every land and of all succeeding ages ; for by means no painter of any school had yet anticipated, Rembrandt contrived to fasten upon the lifeless shapes of the external world a sentiment so deeply human that it ceases to be merely personal, a sentiment inspired by sympathy at once so profound and far-reaching as to endow it with something of universal and epic significance.

For such essays in imaginative landscape of which *The Mill* affords the largest and the greatest example, Rembrandt had fully prepared himself. Of the familiar scenes that lay ready to his hand in the country around Amsterdam, he made a continuous study, copying with patient fidelity the most prosaic realities that came within the range of his observation, and noting with untiring industry the countless variations of light and shade he afterwards fashioned into a language of his own. To understand this aspect of his art, his etched plates and the numerous original drawings from his hand both in pen and wash are absolutely indispensable to the student. Impressions from his etchings may be found in every great National collection, and, in the British Museum, there is also an instructive series of landscape drawings worthily supplemented by studies in the same kind at Chatsworth, forming part of the sketch-



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

THE AVENUE, BY MEINDERT HOBBEMA

National Gallery, London.

book belonging to the Duke of Devonshire. Two of the Museum drawings are in colour and might well have been made at the time when Lord Lansdowne's great picture of *The Mill* was in contemplation, for both are concerned with varying aspects of the grave beauty of twilight. The first is a view of a river with its grassy banks steadily reflected in the gently flowing water: the second shows us a little village half hidden by surrounding trees. Here against the clear evening sky the church tower and the red roofs of the clustering houses are firmly outlined and are set in effective contrast with the massed foliage half hidden in the gathering shadows which subdue but never wholly extinguish the identity of local colour.

From the broad path the master had opened to his followers, the Dutch landscape painters found branching byways of their own. Even those members of the school who were mainly concerned with the facts of human drama occasionally followed the objects of their study from the shadowed interior of the dwelling house or the tavern to the broader illumination of the open air. Jan Steen introduces us in this way to several attractive landscape backgrounds, as may be seen in the view of the garden arbour of *The Resting Traveller* at Montpelier and in the rustic setting of woodland beauty he has given to *The Skittle Players* in the National Gallery. De Hooch rarely ventures beyond the courtyard, but Isack Van Ostade and Adriaen Van der Velde find their idyllic subjects in the farm or the village street or on the frozen waters of river or canal. The great Vermeer has left us only two studies in landscape, but at least one of them — *A View of Delft* — is a masterpiece of surpassing beauty.

Of those whose fame rests solely on landscape it is not here possible to speak at length nor does their art stand greatly in need of laboured commentary or interpretation. It is idle to attempt to convey in words the quiet perfection of Hobbema, the softened charm of Van Goyen, the brooding melancholy of Jacob Van Ruysdael, the idyllic sweetness of Albert Cuyp, whose ruminating cattle seem to carry about

with them as a part of their birthright the golden effulgence of the afternoon sun, or the more searching animal portraiture of Paul Potter, who chooses by preference the sombre skies of threatening weather. Nor need critical analysis be extended upon the idyllic scenes of Nicholas Berghem, the equestrian compositions of Philips Wouwerman, or the countless sea pieces of William Van der Velde. Their separate qualities and their individual limitations are plain for every eye to appreciate and discern. It is only a small plot in the great field of Art that is given to each one of them to till and none of them betray any conscious ambition to survey a wider horizon. The same subject is repeated again and again, sometimes with scarce any variation of detail, and yet it is rendered with the same loving concentration of purpose, the same unfailing dexterity of hand.

THE IDEALS OF SPAIN

THE IDEALS OF SPAIN

To the spiritual ideals of European art the painters of Spain made no considerable contribution. In the earlier no less than in the later period of its growth the Spanish school was content to import and to appropriate an alien tradition, developing without any essential change of imaginative outlook qualities both of design and colour that had been already established and matured by the painters of other lands. There is indeed an earlier and more archaic form of pictorial expression in Spain that bears a stronger impress of native feeling, but the study of this interesting phase of Spanish art scarcely lies within the scope of the present treatise; for the impulses which inspired it were speedily subjugated by larger influences that owned a foreign origin. Turning first to Flanders, and at a later period to Italy, the pictorial art of Spain was for a long period almost wholly dominated by the models it had chosen to adopt, and it was not until the seventeenth century that there arose a group of artists whose efforts availed to secure for the Spanish school its full right to rank in the wider movement of European painting.

Even when that time came, the prominent position that must be conceded to the Spanish school is found to centre mainly in the claims of one dominating personality. El Greco, Tristan of Toledo, Alonso Cano, Ribera, Zurbaran, and even Murillo, to name only the more famous members of the group, though the work of each and all of them may command our admiration, would hardly suffice, if they stood alone, to set the products of the Spanish school in the foremost position which the judgment of history has accorded to it. The derivative qualities everywhere apparent, in



Anderson Photo.

DETAIL FROM THE PICTURE LAS MENINAS WITH PORTRAITS OF INFANTA MARGARITA MARIA AND D. MARIA SARMIENTO, BY VELASQUEZ
Madrid.

their most successful productions would still leave Spanish painting in an inferior category; and it was only the transcendent genius of Velasquez that served to lift the painting of Spain to a place of acknowledged supremacy. This conquest he accomplished by means of gifts that also secured for him a unique position in the history of modern European painting. Unconsciously it may be, but none the less most surely and completely, he carried to a triumphant conclusion tendencies that had been slowly developing for nearly two centuries. Of painting as a separate craft, to be judged independently of the subjects it may seek to illustrate, Velasquez stands as the world's acknowledged master; and in the realm of portraiture, a branch of the art that in its separate evolution is closely linked with that marked increase in imitative resource that had been gradually matured by his predecessors in Venice and Flanders, though there were professors in both lands who can claim to be his peers, there were none who could be accounted his superiors. From the time of Gian Bellini painting, summoning to its service all those elements of technical accomplishment that made for illusion, had been slowly and insensibly detaching itself from that earlier conception of the art which viewed Nature only as a symbol employed to interpret and to enforce a spiritual message resident in the breast of the artist. In the person of Velasquez that detachment becomes absolute and complete. A revolution that had been only in part foreshadowed in the work of Titian and Tintoretto, of Rubens, Frans Hals, and Rembrandt, is by the magic of his hand carried to its full logical conclusion; both in portraiture and in landscape he sums up with unapproachable power tendencies that his forerunners had only initiated, and as his work in this respect stands as the final consummation of past endeavour, so also from another point of view it may be regarded as the herald of all that has since been accomplished by the later schools of Europe.

In the region of historical and ideal composition Velasquez has left much with which his name is indissolubly associated. *The Surrender of Breda, The Forge of Vulcan,*

The Crucifixion, and *The Coronation of the Virgin*, all at Madrid, and *The Rokeby Venus* in our own National Gallery may be cited as among his most celebrated experiments in this kind, but of none of them can it be said that their value as paintings depends chiefly or finally upon the painter's apprehension of the spiritual aspect of his subject. In their essence they appeal to us not as illustrations of the ideas that have called them into being, but by reason of gifts that find larger and less embarrassed exercise in subjects that leave him free to surrender himself completely to the claims of individual portraiture, and to the allurements of realistic representation. If we probe to the core of his genius and dismiss what is inessential in his art, it may indeed be said that portraiture was the sole object of his preoccupation, and if he stands here beyond the reach of rivalry it is because never before or since has a painter existed in whose work we have to acknowledge so perfect a correspondence between the aim and its accomplishment. His hand was ready and apt to satisfy every demand his vision imposed upon it: all that his searching observation apprehended and perceived, his perfect equipment as a craftsman enabled him to present: there is no trace in his work of unsatisfied ambition, no hint that his brush ever faltered or fumbled in its response to the spirit that controlled it. As it moves across the canvas with impartial mastery passing with equal magic from the subtler truths of human form and countenance to the lighter realities of costume, accessory, or scenic surrounding, the surrender of Nature seems everywhere instantaneous and unconditional. Painters there have been of more delicate fibre who even in the region of portraiture would seem to have been haunted by an ideal that sometimes eludes their capture, and of this company Rembrandt may be cited as the most gifted and the most fascinating representative. But that haunting vision of the larger mystery of life, which in a genius such as Rembrandt's finds its way even to the domain of portraiture, Velasquez did not share: and if he evaded the perils involved in this partly lyrical attitude towards his

subject, it may be admitted that he thereby missed the elements of beauty indefinable and yet undeniable that gives to the great master of Holland an unchallenged place of his own among the interpreters of individual character. On the other hand, it may be conceded that the personal detachment of a painter so superbly gifted as Velasquez brings us into the presence of a mystery that is in its own way no less profound. Penetration of objective truth at once so comprehensive and so subtle calling to its aid technical resources so magical, not merely in initiative illusion but in their power of subordinating all lesser realities to what is dominating and essential, argues in its possessor the existence of a kind of imaginative force that is not the less notable because it expresses itself only in terms of the art in which it lies embedded. For this is not the cold and calculating inspection of the scientific spirit; it bears witness in every marking of the brush of the presence of that finer temper that re-creates where it seems only to collect and record, moulding with a certainty and celerity which only the rarest imaginative faculty can command the myriad facts supplied by Nature into new forms of beauty that become the inalienable possession of art.

In the case of no other painter, therefore, are we so sharply confronted with what may be called the insoluble riddle of art. What is that quality in a painting or a piece of sculpture, in a poem or in a musical composition that constitutes its sole title to existence? To this question the philosophy of art has not yet supplied a satisfying answer, and the most searching analysis yields only the irrefutable truth, that this essential attribute is finally incapable of definition in any other terms than those supplied by the medium in which it is expressed. The beauty of a perfect statue is communicable only in terms of marble or bronze: the inscrutable appeal of a faultless musical composition is incapable of any exact definition in words; and music itself is equally powerless to render or to re-create those effects of melody, kindred and yet divergent, that a poet is able to fashion from the lifeless currency of language. So also is it



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo

Louvre, Paris.

PORTRAIT OF THE INFANTA MARGARITA, BY VELASQUEZ

with painting. The results achieved by genius from the combined resources of form and colour obstinately refuse to reveal the source or the nature of their acknowledged charm to any process of scientific scrutiny however patient or persistent. All that we certainly know is that a triumph in any one field of art becomes in the process of its creation so inseparable from the vehicle employed in its utterance that it can finally afford to discard the support of the ideas which gave it birth. For even if it be conceded that all great painting is in its essence narrative painting, this must not be taken to imply that the skill with which the story is told constitutes its ultimate claim to recognition. All that is implied by the statement is that the claims of the legend have proved in the case of men of the highest originating power the most inspiring force in the generation of qualities that belong exclusively to the art they practise. In the completed form which each individual conception finally assumes, the interest of the narrative may be so far submerged as to be almost indecipherable and yet it may still be profoundly true that it was primarily to the urgent call of the legend that we owe that perfection which is no longer dependent upon the forces that gave it birth.

This same propelling force of the narrative, though not so immediately apparent, may be as surely discerned in the art of the portrait painter. Here it is only the story of a single face that he has to reveal, and here again it is not this revelation, however absorbing may be the interest it arouses, that constitutes the final appeal of the picture as a work of art. Even in the case of genius so impersonal as that of Velasquez the indefinable quality that makes for perfection, and in the larger and fuller signification of the term for beauty, also is drawn by the painter from hidden resources within himself. No mere exhibition of the resident facts of the subject, however subtle or searching, could have availed to win for the result that ultimate seal of beauty which belongs incontestably to every one of Velasquez's masterpieces in portraiture whether the sitter he ennobles by his pencil be beggar, clown, or king. And yet

at the first encounter it is not the sense of beauty that consciously engages the attention of the beholder. If we take by way of illustration the head of *Philip IV* in the National Gallery or the superb portrait of *Pope Innocent X* of the Doria Palace in Rome, the uncompromising veracity of characterisation would seem to leave no room in the painter's mind for considerations purely artistic. Yet these two pictures, both of which belong to his later time, embody in the fullest perfection an ideal in painting that had been awaiting fulfillment from the time when naturalistic tendencies of the school of Venice first brought its professors into close contact with the reality. It was the special function of Velasquez's genius to perceive that these hoarded stores of imitative illusion needed once more to be brought under the control of a single imaginative impression. And this he effected by a conquest of the combined problems of colour and tone only hinted at in the work of his predecessors, and never surpassed by any painter of a later time. The influence of neighbouring tints upon one another, and the subjugation of them all to the dominating authority of a chosen effect of light and shade, remains as Velasquez's supreme accomplishment in the story of European painting.

The outward circumstances of Velasquez's life are instructive in the light they throw upon his development as a painter. In common with all men of high originality he was a diligent student both of the present and the past. His devotion to Nature, his persistent and patient study of truths of form and colour as they presented themselves to his observation in the world about him, was a marked characteristic of his youthful apprenticeship in painting. The measure of objective truth that he pressed into the service of his art was so far in excess of what had been hitherto attained that on the very threshold of his career he had practically to invent for himself the technique he afterwards perfected. The new ideal for which he was searching involved an almost complete revolution in the processes of the painter's craft, and during this preparatory period, when he was re-casting the tools of his trade, he occupied himself

with absorbing industry upon types of humanity that he found ready to his hand, upon unselected objects of still life, and upon the unconsidered features of the scenic surroundings of Seville and Madrid. That he should at the same time have shown an equal determination to probe the ideals of earlier schools and to master the methods of his predecessors is in a sense more surprising. Against constituted authority in art, whether founded on classic tradition or enriched by the independent victories of the Renaissance, the invincible personality of Velasquez opposed an impregnable wall that resisted every assault from whatever quarter it might come. It has been seen how Rubens, setting out for Italy with the deliberate purpose of capturing the secrets of beauty that had been revealed by the Florentine masters of design, found himself powerless to effect more than a superficial alliance with the spirit that inspired them. And yet Rubens' genius, despite its ineradicable racial limitations, was pliant and ductile compared with that of Velasquez; and it therefore bears testimony to the innate modesty of his nature that he should have occupied himself for so long a period of his youthful career in copying the Italian masterpieces that had been collected at Madrid, and in that larger and longer study of their achievements which he made during his sojourn in Italy.

Born in Seville in the year 1599 he entered, as a boy of thirteen, the studio of Francisco de Herrera, but a brief experience of the violent temper of his master led him at the end of a year to take service with Francisco Pacheco, whose partiality for his gifted pupil resulted in Velasquez's marriage with his master's daughter in the spring of the year 1618. On the accession of Philip IV in 1621 Velasquez, through the good offices of Count Olivarez, the newly appointed minister to the King, was summoned to Madrid. On the occasion of a second visit to the capital in 1623 the young painter was commissioned to execute an equestrian portrait of the King, a work that found such favour that at the age of twenty-four its author received the appointment of court painter. It was at Madrid that he made the per-

sonal acquaintance of Rubens, who visited Spain for the second time in 1628, and it is said to have been due to the influence and advice of the great Flemish artist that Velasquez in the year 1629 was permitted to set out upon a visit to Italy. Milan was his first halting place, and from there he proceeded to Venice, where he made acquaintance with the work of Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto, for the last of whom his admiration was unstinted and enduring. Turning southward he made no pause at Florence but went direct to Rome in order, as we may assume, that he might make a prolonged study of the masterpieces of Raphael and Michelangelo. He made a second stay of two years in Italy in 1648, but his mission on the occasion of this later journey was that of connoisseur, entrusted by the King with the purchase of works of art; and it was then that he painted the portrait of Innocent X now in the Doria Palace.

Velasquez has left no record of his impressions during his sojourn in Italy, but from his own practice we may confidently conjecture who among the masters he studied were the special objects of his preference. Nor are we left wholly without contemporary witness to his imperfect sympathy with one at least of the great Florentines. Boschini in his *Chart of Pictorial Navigation*, a rhyming chronicle of the time, reports that the Spanish painter spoke slightly of the claims of Raphael and avowed his allegiance to the school of Venice; and we know from other sources that although he formally accepted the supremacy of Titian among masters of the North, it was from the larger discoveries in the realm of light and shade which Tintoretto had made that he found whatever of inspiration he needed in the work of those who had preceded him.

No greater contrast can be found in the whole history of painting than that which is presented between the art of Velasquez and his younger contemporary Murillo. The fearless survey of the facts of Nature and of the secrets of individual character made in a spirit at once impartial and impersonal and yet ever urged forward by an unquenchable curiosity in its quest of truth is now suddenly exchanged

for a style wherein the garnered graces of long-established tradition are surcharged by an unrestrained emotionalism that fails to hide or even to disguise the enfeebled forces of imaginative vision. On one side of his art Murillo, too, was a naturalist, and his varied studies of beggar children served to prove that he was not inaccessible to the direct appeal of reality. But in the more ambitious pictures upon which his fame chiefly rests, the vigour and vitality of these simpler studies yields to a wave of sentiment that has long parted with all traces of convincing sincerity. And this failure of imaginative power carries with it a corresponding decay in all the essential qualities of executive style. In the season of his youth he had been stimulated by copies of the works of Rubens and Van Dyck, and he had carefully husbanded his resources in order that like his instructor, Pedro de Moya, he might journey to Flanders and make a more profound and intimate study of these two great masters. But his pilgrimage took him no farther than Madrid, where he was kindly received by Velasquez. He remained in the Spanish capital for a period of ten years, but there is no evidence that his genius was ever deeply touched by the example of his greater contemporary. In the Royal galleries he found himself in the presence of notable works by Titian, Veronese, Rubens, and Van Dyck, all of which he carefully studied and repeatedly copied. In 1645 he returned once more to Seville, and four years later commenced the execution of the series of paintings wherein for the first time the virtues no less than the frailties of his artistic individuality were fully and freely asserted.

Though nearly twenty years the junior of Velasquez, Murillo belongs in spirit to an earlier tradition from which Velasquez had wholly emancipated himself. He represents in Spanish painting of the seventeenth century all that the art of his time was able to inherit from the past, while in the work of Velasquez we have all that Spain was destined to bequeath by way of example to the future.

THE IDEALS OF FRANCE

THE IDEALS OF FRANCE

THE story of modern French painting dates from the opening years of the seventeenth century. In the preceding epoch the artists who had ministered to the needs of their time had been, for the most part, of alien origin ; and under the alternating influence of Flanders and Italy, France had continued to signify her formal homage to religion by repeating with an increasing convention of style the interpretation of those subjects which the demands of the Church imposed upon the painters who served her. For the rest, French art remained content with the faithful portraiture of the chief historic figures of the age, and in this department of pictorial activity Jean Clouet and his son François, who brought from Brussels the principles of precise and searching draftsmanship that were characteristic of their school, have registered for us the features of the leading actors in the courts of François I and his successors.

But even during this period, in the larger arena of decorative painting, the eyes of those who were the dictators of taste in France were constantly fixed upon the triumphs achieved by the great masters of Italy. The patronage of Italian painting had begun even before François I ascended the throne. Louis XII, during his stay at Milan, had endeavoured to persuade Leonardo da Vinci to work for him, and a letter is extant, written after his return to France in 1513, in which this invitation is renewed. Cardinal d'Amboise, Louis' famous minister, who at an earlier date had been in correspondence with Andrea Mantegna, was the first to give practical expression to the Italian influence that prevailed at the French court. Twenty-five years before Fontainebleau was erected he had summoned Leonardo's pupil, Solario, from Milan to decorate his castle at Gaillon.

But it was the taste and persistent determination of François I that ultimately availed to establish the tradition of Italian design upon French art during the sixteenth century. He commissioned, through the instrumentality of Pope Leo X, Raphael's *Saint Michael*, now included in the collection at the Louvre, and he even conceived the fantastic project of bodily transporting Leonardo's fresco of *The Last Supper* from Milan to Paris. Although this ambitious scheme proved impossible of execution, he did succeed in persuading its great author to become his guest, and Leonardo, who arrived in France in 1516, spent there the remainder of his life.

The pictures from his hand, now included in the National Gallery of France, were only in certain instances the direct result of this particular period of his career. Some of them were probably brought with him, by Leonardo, when he first came from Italy, for there is a report by an eye-witness, who accompanied Cardinal Louis de Bourbon to the artist's studio in 1516, who relates that he saw there several finished canvases, including a portrait of a Florentine lady, a young St. John the Baptist, and a picture of Saint Anne. A year before Leonardo's death Andrea del Sarto followed him to France. His stay, however, was brief and when, according to the authority of Vasari, he was peremptorily summoned home by his wife he was, perhaps rashly, entrusted by François I with certain funds which were to be expended in the purchase of antiquities. These funds, so the legend runs, were squandered by the artist in the discharge of his own personal debts, which may presumably be taken in explanation of the fact that he never renewed his services at the French Court. Both Leonardo and Andrea had brought in their train a troop of assistants, and they, in various directions, doubtless helped the growth of the principles of Italian design in their application to French buildings. But it was not until more than ten years later that François succeeded in drawing to France men whom he could permanently employ in the execution of the larger schemes he had in hand. It was then that Il Rosso took



Giraudon Photo.

Louvre, Paris.

François I, BY JEAN CLOUET

up his residence in France where, in 1532, he was joined by Primaticcio, the most distinguished of the pupils who had been engaged upon the great decorative works which Giulio Romano had carried out at Mantua.

At that time François I had in contemplation the reconstruction and adornment of the château of Fontainebleau. During the thirteen years of his reign that had already passed, building had been one of his favourite hobbies. He had made extensive additions to the château of Blois and had spent enormous sums upon Chambord, which he scarcely ever inhabited. But Fontainebleau was destined to prove an object of more enduring attraction. Before the engagement of Il Rosso and Primaticcio, architects had been busily at work upon its reconstruction and enlargement, and within the space of ten years — a brief period if we consider the magnitude of the undertaking — it was completed and perfected in every part.

The many visitors who find their way to Fontainebleau perhaps hardly realise its historical value. In this one building is summed up and expressed the whole of the contribution that was made to painting in France during the sixteenth century. It therefore silences completely all the claims that may be put forward on behalf of the existence of a native school of French painters during this epoch. The argument sometimes is put forward by a section of French critics, that if François I had not unduly favoured the representative craftsmen of Italy, French painting, as it had found expression in the Middle Ages, might have progressed along natural lines of development. This connoisseur king is made subject to censure of another kind in that he should have had recourse to the expiring tradition of Tuscany in preference to the still vital art of Venice. To the first objection it may be answered that there was, in fact, no native school of French painting which could claim any vigorous life in the opening years of the century when François I ascended the throne; and if due weight be given to the fundamental impulses of the French artistic spirit it must, I think, be admitted that in the choice between

Florence and Venice, the decision that is so emphatically declared at Fontainebleau was inevitable.

During the reign of Henri II there was a further invasion of Italian artists who were concerned in the execution of important additions to the still uncompleted decorations at Fontainebleau. Niccolo Abbâté, of Modena, arrived in France in the year 1552 in time to assist Primaticcio in the painting of the great Ballroom and of the Ulysses Gallery. Of these enterprises only the paintings in the Ballroom are left to us, but in a condition so transformed and disfigured by modern restoration effected in the reign of Louis Philippe, that the original conception can now no longer be fairly judged, save in the preparatory drawings executed by Primaticcio's own hand. Among other Italian painters who laboured in the service of Henri II and his successor, are Salviati, who arrived from Italy in 1554, and Paris Bordone, who made only a brief sojourn in France in the year 1559. The last name is significant as that of the only representative of the Venetian school who seems to have found his way to the French Court.

Under the lingering influences that survived from the tradition of Fontainebleau the native school of French painting, under the leadership of Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), came into being. By this time the centre of artistic activity in Italy had shifted farther south, and it was, therefore, towards Rome that the eyes of Poussin and his followers instinctively turned for inspiration. That magnet city which during the whole progress of the Renaissance generated no vital movement of its own had, nevertheless, attracted to its service during successive epochs the most distinguished exponents of the genius of Umbria and Tuscany ; and although the glories of that earlier day had vanished and the great rôle played by Italy in the artistic history of the Renaissance had been brought to a close, the tradition they had left was still strong enough to draw to the walls of Rome the pilgrim feet of the most accomplished of French painters. The Eternal City was indeed at that time little more than the sepulchre of the mighty spirit of the Renaissance, but



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

SHEPHERDS OF ARCADIA, BY NICOLAS POUSSIN

Louvre, Paris.

the ashes it enshrined compelled the pious worship of the painters of every country of Europe for two centuries yet to come.

Nicolas Poussin was born at Les Andeleys in Normandy in the year 1594 and passed the first years of his studentship in Paris. It was not indeed until the year 1623 that he set out for Rome, and it is interesting to recall the fact that at that date Rubens, who in virtue of native genius stood head and shoulders above all his contemporaries, was already at work in the Luxembourg upon that grandiose series of compositions Marie de Médicis had commissioned in commemoration of her marriage with Henry IV. It may well have been that the young Poussin watched the great Flemish master at his task; and it bears testimony to the immutable strength of his adherence to a different ideal that he should have shown himself unshaken in his devotion to the Classic tradition which still survived in Rome. For, apart from his individual genius, Rubens in his practice as a painter embodied with incomparable power those great qualities as a colourist which he had garnered in his allegiance to the masters of Venice. He had already spent seven years of his youth in Italy, devoting special attention to the paintings of Titian and Paul Veronese; and although he had been indefatigable in his study of every form of art in which the genius of Italy expressed itself, it was with the surviving spirit of the great Venetians that he naturally allied himself.

It will be seen, therefore, that the artistic soul of France must already have been irrevocably pledged to the principles of formal design, seeing that its most gifted disciple, during the impressionable period of his youth, could so resolutely have turned his back upon those allurements in the region of colour that were spread at his feet by the greatest master of Flanders. Whatever the effect of the decision taken by Poussin and his associates on the later development of the French school, it had at least this result, that for nearly a century to come French painters deliberately and almost completely renounced all claim to rank as colourists in the true and full sense of the term. For in the Rome towards

which their feet were turned, the claims of colour as a competing factor with design had been almost completely submerged. The gem-like quality born of the fearless association of brilliant hues that had belonged to the earlier Florentine no longer survived ; and, on the other hand, men who believed themselves to be the rightful heirs of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo betrayed neither the power nor the ambition to appropriate the later splendours of the painters of Venice. It was indeed not till the advent of Watteau that French painting could boast any assured mastery in the region of colour.

If we look to the earlier record of the artistic spirit in France, the tendency which definitely declared itself at the opening of the seventeenth century can be no matter for wonder. France's superb contribution to art had been made in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and had been secured by her victories in design. The great ecclesiastical buildings that rose into being during that epoch may be counted as the noblest independent achievement in the art of modern Europe, an achievement secured by the inexhaustible invention of its builders, and of the carvers in stone whom they had summoned to their aid. It is scarcely surprising that at this time, when the whole of its artistic genius and energy was concentrated upon problems of construction and upon the new victories in beauty of design which grew out of their successful solution, the art of painting should have been relegated to a subordinate place. Sculpture emerged by a natural process from the organism it was employed to adorn, but the constructive features of the new architecture proved in themselves an influence that was destined to arrest the further progress of painting. The massive wall spaces that had been a necessity to the Romanesque builders encouraged the employment of painting in the decoration of its extended surfaces, but these wall spaces gradually disappeared as the ingenuity of the Gothic architects discovered other means of supporting the lofty, vaulted roofs that with every fresh adventure rose to heights undreamt of by the builders of an earlier time. Arched

bays pierced the long length of the naves of these Gothic cathedrals and flying buttresses — themselves transformed into things of beauty — came to the support of the impending weight of the roof; while windows interlaced with delicate tracery of stone afforded room in their brilliant hues of stained glass for the expression of that joy in colour that had previously found utterance in mural painting.

It was in the monasteries attached to these great abbeys and cathedrals that painting as a separate art was driven to find employment. The illuminated manuscripts of France are among the most beautiful that Europe can show; and if we would seek for the manifestation of rich and brilliant colouring during the fifteenth century we must turn to the makers of these manuscripts, where we shall find these qualities associated with a new and faithful observation of the social life of the time and an often surprising power in the delineation of the facts of the landscape in which the human figures are set. Jean Fouquet (1415–1485), who has also left notable examples of his powers in portraiture in the heads of Charles VII and his counsellor Juvenal des Ursins, exhibits his artistic gift to even greater advantage in the delicate illustrations of the Book of Hours executed for Etienne Chevalier and of the History of the Jews by Josephus, while in the concluding years of the century Jean Bourdichon produced most admirable work in the same kind.

But the painter's art is here exercised in a strictly limited arena, and even within those boundaries often reveals traces of its derivative character. Whereas French architecture and French sculpture continued to speak with a living voice from the close of the twelfth century to the concluding period of the Renaissance, reflecting every phase of the transition from the Gothic to the Classical ideal, without sacrifice of its purely native accent, the French school of painting as it emerges with the dawn of the seventeenth century clearly bears the stamp of foreign origin.

The sense of form which may be said to be indigenous in the genius of France has at constantly recurring intervals

subjected her painters to the authority of Classic tradition ; and it would have been surprising if at the particular epoch we are considering the young Frenchmen who were journeying to Italy had halted in their choice between the contrasted ideals of Venice and Florence. Poussin, at least, betrayed no hesitation, and when, in 1623, he set out for Rome he not only cut himself definitely adrift from whatever of national tradition may have survived in his native land, but placed himself without reserve under the authority of those principles of design which even in their enfeebled form confessed their descent from the great masters of Tuscany.

His art, as it developed, displayed certain noble attributes, noble both of conception and execution but could not at any time in his career claim a distinctively national note or boast the impress of strong individual character. It was indeed his misfortune, a misfortune inseparable from the age in which he lived, that he should have surrendered himself to the spirit of Italian painting at a moment when it was already sinking into decline. When he arrived in Rome the work of those who were to become his teachers and associates was itself but a pale shadow of the earlier glories they sought to perpetuate. Annibale Carracci had died in 1609 and those who are familiar with his decorations in the Farnese Palace, in Rome, will be able to realise how swiftly, even in that short space of time, his survivors had fallen from the ideal he attained. In the art of men like Guido Reni, Domenichino, or Guercino, an enfeebled and exaggerated sentiment had already supplanted the masculine vigour of Annibale's invention.

The exponents of an outworn tradition of style, their example, it would seem, could scarcely have been a source of fruitful encouragement to the more austere spirit in which Poussin laboured from the inception to the end of his career. Though perhaps imperceptible to him at the time, their cold eclecticism raised a wall of frozen air between the young French painter and the greater objects of his reverence, barring the way that led to any true worship of the spirit of the antique no less surely than it intercepted his vision of



Lévy et fils Photo.

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE, BY NICOLAS POUSSIN

Louvre, Paris.

those matchless qualities of design embodied in the works of Raphael and Michelangelo. In the result they tended to reduce Poussin's art in its pursuit of both ideals to little more than an act of barren homage. A highly trained intelligence yoked to unswerving persistence of purpose did indeed enable him to make external appropriation of the attributes both of the one and the other, but his own temperament lacked the needed flame and fire to recapture their inner spirit.

Strangely enough in the learned compositions he has left to the world it is in the element of landscape that we find the surest touch of vitality. The relation of landscape to the figures it enshrines had already undergone a process of transformation. Its increasing claims as a factor in pictorial composition had insensibly grown in importance and, in the hands of Poussin, it was used to re-create the fancied topography of those scenes wherein the gods and heroes of ancient mythology find their imagined home.

But in this particular branch of art there stood beside him in Rome an untutored youth from Lorraine who was destined to establish a more enduring claim upon the attention of posterity. Claude Gelée, born in the year 1600 in the little village of Chamagne near the northern boundary of the present department of the Vosges, was already resident in Rome before Poussin's arrival. As a boy he had been bred amid the meadows that skirt the winding course of the Moselle, and some of his biographers would have us believe that the scenes upon which he gazed as a child reappeared in their main features in the considered landscapes of his maturity. Such scenes, however, were deserted long before he acquired any skill as a painter, for he was only a boy of thirteen when he left his native village and set out for Italy.

What took him on this adventurous errand is not very clear. According to one account he had been trained as a pastry cook, and it is known that many of his compatriots in that district of the Vosges who had adopted the same calling were at this time seeking employment in Rome. Certain it is that on his arrival in the capital he found

employment in the house of one Tassi, a decorator, and still more certain is it that, from the time of his first essays in art, the character of his new environment was clearly stamped upon his work and remained as an enduring influence to the end of his career. In the case of Claude, however, the spell exercised by the Classic tradition was born rather of sentiment and observation than of any definite ambition such as that which directed the art of his compatriot, Nicolas Poussin.

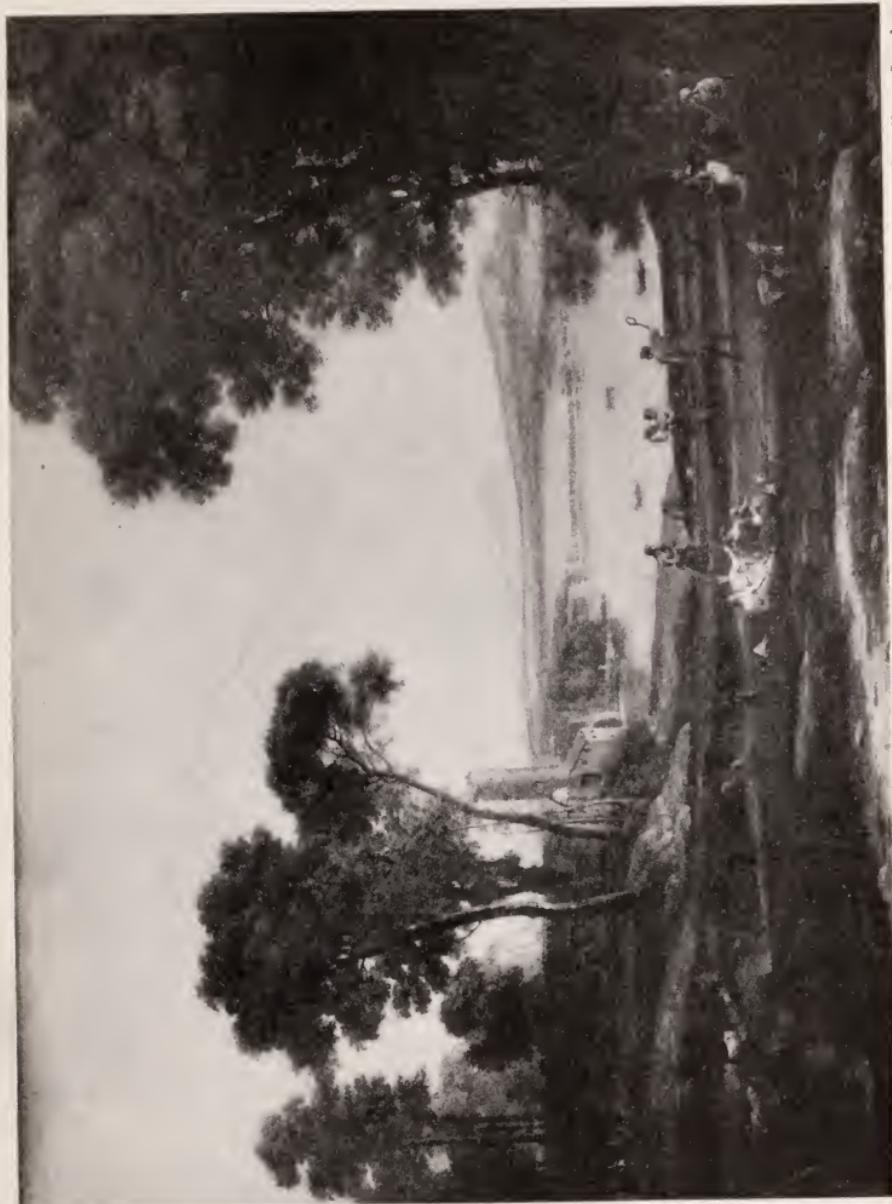
In 1625, after his apprenticeship with Tassi had come to an end, he was impelled to revisit his native land. The course of his northern journey led him to Venice, but the example of Venetian painting with its overpowering allurements of colour was powerless to disturb or supplant that earlier ideal which had already become a part of his nature. The freer spirit in which Titian approached the interpretation of the beauties of the outward world evoked no response in the breast of the young Frenchman, whose system as a landscape painter remained to the end firmly founded upon principles of composition and design from which Titian's genius had definitely broken away. At the conclusion of this one brief visit to France, Claude returned to Italy by way of Marseilles, and the only trace his temporary exile from the land of his adoption has left upon his art is to be found in certain of his earlier studies of harbour life which were doubtless suggested to him by his short stay in the great Mediterranean port.

But although Claude never accepted the Titianesque ideal in landscape, it would be an error to assume that his more conventional scheme of composition left him indifferent to the claims of Nature. The beauty that springs out of the association of the remains of Classic architecture, half devoured by time and half recaptured by the scenes they had once dominated, and that unchanging loveliness of the landscape that had preceded and still outlived them, was spread before his eyes in his constant wanderings through the country that encircles the Eternal City. That beauty did not need the support of learning and research in the

appeal it made to his temperament, and his German biographer, Sandrart, who was also his close companion during several years of his earlier life in Rome, has left us a faithful picture of one of the many excursions made by Claude and his painter comrades in which one of these scenes he has so often and so lovingly depicted was made their chosen meeting place. It was to Tivoli they journeyed, on the day described by Sandrart, and Nicolas Poussin as well as Pieter de Laer and Sandrart himself were of the company; and as I gazed some few years ago from the little Roman temple perched upon the rock overlooking the waterfall that descends into the valley, I could not help reflecting that here, without the need of antiquarian reconstruction, art and Nature had combined to offer all the material needed by the genius of Claude for those visions in which the present and the past mingle in shapes of beauty that have something of the enchantment of a dream.

Claude's landscape, indeed, when it seems most conventional is never the creation of mere artifice. However it may have been shaped and moulded by the controlling spirit of his design, its vital features are found to be firmly rooted in reality. It may even be said that this element of artifice is closely linked with the secret of its enduring charm. The scattered profusion which Nature laid at his feet was sorted and sifted before he finally selected from material so patiently gathered the facts that were to be admitted within the region of his invention. The illimitable world of Nature, a world he could explore with untiring industry, was in a sense only a vast antechamber to the smaller kingdom over which he desired to rule, a kingdom wherein placid waters that break in whispering fall as they descend to quiet pools below, stretch to wide horizons of gently undulating hills into whose distant recesses we are allowed to gaze through the overarching boughs that frame the foreground of his vision.

Neither in colour nor in design does Claude's art seek or boast a merely imitative triumph. In the fuller acceptance of the word Claude indeed can scarcely be said to rank among born colourists. The brilliant hues of Nature that capture



National Gallery, London.

MARRIAGE OF ISAAC AND REBECCA, BY CLAUDE LORRAINE

and subdue the imagination of men differently gifted never wholly enslaved his spirit. To the last his colouring, whatever its charm, was no more than a carefully modulated medium for the revelation of those formal beauties upon which his vision was constantly fixed. It is a veil lightly laid upon these enduring shapes of beauty: a veil that even when it is woven of more glowing tissues than his contemporaries could command, fails to waken in the separate tints it envelops any echo of the rich and radiant glories that characterise the work of the great Venetians. Still less does his colouring admit those swift and sudden contrasts of tone that were at a later time developed in the landscape painting of the North; while in respect to form, though every outline in his work is clearly and sharply defined, there is a premeditated avoidance of that exact portraiture of any individual scene which is characteristic of the art of a later day.

And yet we know it was out of the ample store of faithfully recorded impressions of local truth that Claude evolved the mastery which still lends life and illusion even to the most carefully ordered shapes of his invention. In the Print Room of the British Museum are nearly three hundred original drawings from his hand affording material for the appreciation of his art in every phase of his career. They form indeed an intimate record of the varying moods of his mind as it sought to register completed designs for his finished pictures or as it endeavoured to seize upon some fleeting effect of light and shade that appealed to him in Nature. However far Claude may afterwards have chosen to carry the process of generalisation in his final treatment of the material he had collected, these preliminary studies at any rate serve to prove that his work in this direction was deliberate and intentional and did not spring from any imperfect knowledge of literal truth. We find here countless memoranda that in their direct vigour and vitality sometimes recall the hand of Rembrandt. They fix by means often identical with those employed by the great Dutchman, sudden harmonies imposed upon the facts of landscape by the

fortunate and fleeting incident of some passing effect of light and shade. There is one in particular of a tranquil pool of water with dark overhanging trees in which it may be seen that the artist has been attracted solely by the play of light and shade upon the high grass banks and the reflected lights upon the motionless water below. This sketch, only a sample of numberless others executed in the same spirit, is dated in the year 1662 and proves, therefore, that even in his maturity Claude retained the modesty of the student and was still constantly on the alert to add to that inexhaustible store of beauty which Nature opened to his vision. Elsewhere in this wonderful series we find the artist intent upon enriching his stock of natural form in rock and tree and distant undulating hill out of which he was to fashion those considered designs that in their last appeal through the medium of colour seem sometimes to have sacrificed too much of the spontaneous charm that never deserts him in the preliminary stages of his labour.

Taken as a whole such a collection as this, which is indeed indispensable to a full understanding of his genius, cannot fail to illumine and enlarge our final judgment of Claude's place in art. They bring us into touch with certain qualities that are partly obscured in the more elaborate of his finished compositions: the personality of the artist is here ever present, lending warmth and a new sense of conviction to those more abstract features of design that sometimes seem to overburden his final utterance. This great inventor in landscape, often fanciful, sometimes even artificial, who sought to refashion and to re-create that world of beauty which others, perhaps more greatly gifted, are content to interpret, is here shown to us as a painstaking student of facts in Nature which it was his ultimate purpose to modify and to reconstruct. In this accumulated harvest of observed and recorded phenomena, much of which he afterwards elected to discard, he undoubtedly acquired the power of granting to the most idealised forms of his work a saving grace of vitality that ensures its enduring charm.

The voluntary exile which Poussin and Claude Lorraine

had imposed upon themselves lasted to the end of their lives. Poussin also paid one visit to his native land, but his brief sojourn in Paris lasted barely three years, and in 1643 he returned to Italy and again resumed his residence in Rome, where he died in 1665.

Meanwhile Paris had become the official centre of painting in France, and Lebrun, in the absence of his greater contemporaries, was now accepted as its chief official representative. The Academy was founded in 1648, and Lebrun was elected as its president. But this attempt to organise the resources of France failed to secure for it any clear impress of national character; in its main features it remained, for those who stayed at home no less than for those who journeyed to Italy, constantly under the shadow and authority of Rome.

For the seeker after beauty, French painting, as it found expression in France itself during the seventeenth century, offers for the most part a sterile and barren tract of country. In the region of historical and imaginative painting, always an intolerable manifestation of art when it lacks the support of inspired vision, there is nothing to report in the ambitious compositions of men like Le Sueur, Nicolas Mignard, or Tournier, which amounts to more than a vain and feeble echo of the buried past. Towards the close of the century there are to be detected the signs of a diminished austerity of spirit without any corresponding gain in essential vitality. The works of Jouvenet, Coypel, or Le Moigne, though they bring historic painting into close touch with the changed taste and fashions of social life, mirror a revolution that is scarcely more than superficial.

Portraiture, which at every epoch in the history of painting contrives to survive when the more imaginative forms of art have become lifeless and outworn, was represented not only by Lebrun himself but by his rival Pierre Mignard, and they in turn were succeeded by Largilliére and Rigaud, who in regard both to qualities of design and increased brilliance of colour did indeed register some nearer approach to the models offered by Venice and Flanders. But when their

work is set in contrast with that of Rubens and Van Dyck or of the contemporary masters of Holland it will be acknowledged that even French portraiture during this period spoke with no voice of commanding authority. The work of the brothers Lenain stands almost alone in its endeavour to image faithfully certain aspects in the contemporary life of the people. It bears little relation in the serious spirit that inspires it to anything which preceded or immediately followed it in France or to the contemporary masterpieces of the *Genre* painters of Holland. In its gravity it would rather seem to anticipate the realism that found expression at a much later period, but whatever its interest and value as an independent achievement it indicated no sustained or continuous movement towards a closer alliance with Nature in its deeper or its lighter aspects. For that the world had to wait till the dawn of the next century.

It is strange that the first breath of new life should have been imported into French painting by one who, in the external attributes of the style he established, seemed to carry the domain of art still further from the confines of reality. The world of Watteau's fancy was a kingdom of his own creation whose borders are clearly marked off from the world of common experience; and yet within the narrow limits he imposed upon himself there is a stronger impress of nature, a more magical sense of vitality than had yet found its way into French painting. The frame is so small, the surrender to an accepted convention so complete that we are in danger of undervaluing the inherent greatness of the achievement. It is hard at first to measure the wealth of reality that is revealed through the unreal personages who inhabit the land that Watteau so frankly fashioned out of the artificial material he borrowed from the resources of the theatre; and yet it is impossible to study the finest of Watteau's compositions without being sensible that his hand is guided by a keener and deeper vision of life than that which inspired any of his predecessors in France during the seventeenth century. Of life and of youth: for as we wander among the denizens of these invented woodlands we are con-

scious that they have cast off the outworn garment of age and have recaptured the quickened pulses that belong to the springtime of the world.

That this revolution should have been accomplished without the support of example or tradition by the son of a humble coppersmith of Valenciennes is one of those miracles that are constantly recurring in the history of genius. And of Watteau's genius there can be no question. Born in the year 1684, he passed the first years of his boyhood in his native town where, after some little prefatory opposition on the part of his parents, he was sent to acquire the rudiments of his craft, first with a master who proved wholly inefficient for the purpose, and afterwards with Jacques Albert Gérin, a painter of considerable resource and reputation. In Gérin's atelier, which he entered in 1698, as a lad of fourteen years of age, Watteau studied hard and learned much. But, as is the way with genius, which owns a capacity for self-education beyond the dreams of mere talent, he acquired even more from his own ceaseless study of incident and character as they presented themselves to his observation in the daily life of Valenciennes. It is interesting to note that it was here he first developed his taste for the life of the theatre, and there is a sketch from his hand, dated 1697 and inscribed *Le Départ des Comediens Italiens*, which coincides with the date when these irreverent strolling players were expelled from France by Louis XIV, by reason of their audacious caricatures of the King and Madame de Maintenon.

In the towns scattered about Valenciennes were to be found numerous examples of the Flemish school illustrating the genius of Rubens in its larger flights as well as the more modest art of Genre painting as exhibited in the work of Teniers; and it may be noted that Watteau's first essay in the study of manners is frankly conceived in the manner of the latter. *La Vraie Gaiété* in Sir Charles Tennant's collection reveals scarcely a hint of that note of distinction which belongs to Watteau in his maturity, but it does show that he was already watchful of the subtleties of natural gesture and



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

LE RETOUR DE CHASSE, BY ANTOINE WATTEAU

Wallace Collection.

action which remain among the enduring secrets of his art. When Gérin died in 1701 the boy painter must have felt himself forlorn. His master, whom he had greatly loved, had spoken to him much and often about Paris and its treasures of art and it is, therefore, scarcely wonderful that, oppressed by the restraint of his home, where his poor progress in the profession he had chosen was made the subject of ridicule, he should have secretly determined to set out for the French capital.

This resolve he carried into effect in March, 1702, when, with little more than the clothes he wore and wholly unknown to his parents, he set out upon the road that was to lead him to Paris. There his life was at first one of hardship and privation. His earliest employment was with Louis Métayer, a decorator, but the drudgery imposed upon him in the workshop of his master grew insupportably irksome, and, by the aid of a young artist from Antwerp whose acquaintance he had made, he became apprenticed to Claude Gillot, whose work as an inventor of ornament brought him into connection with the life of the theatre. Gillot was frankly charmed with Watteau's talent, whose larger earnings now provided him with more leisure for his own studies. In his daily wanderings in the streets and gardens of the city, and in the larger excursions which took him to the woods and open country beyond, he found ample material for exercise of his indefatigable industry.

It was under Gillot, who was employed at the Grand Opera, that Watteau made the acquaintance of the celebrated danseuse known as La Montague, with whom he instantly fell violently in love. The lady rejected his addresses but by way of consolation she allowed the young painter to depict her in every conceivable pose, a result perhaps more valuable to the artist than any which might have followed if he had become her accepted lover. Watteau remained five years in Gillot's studio and during the whole of this time he continued his study of the great Italian masters that were to be found in the public galleries of Paris. He also renewed his devotion to Rubens through the great

series of paintings in the Luxembourg which had been commissioned by Marie de Médicis; and when he terminated his connection with Gillot in 1708 the period of his studentship may have been said to have been brought to a close.

After his rupture with Gillot, Watteau found employment with Claude Audran, one of Gillot's most distinguished pupils. Audran had been appointed keeper of the gallery of the Luxembourg, and in this capacity he was enabled to place much decorative work in Watteau's hands. By his master's advice Watteau had been entered as a pupil of the Royal Academy, and in April, 1709, he formed one of five artists who competed for the Grand Prix. His judges were Jouvenet, De Lafosse, Rigaud, Largillièr, Vivien, and Desportes, an oddly assorted jury if we look at their names from our standpoint of to-day, to pronounce upon the talent of one who stands head and shoulders above them all. Stranger yet is it to record that Watteau, by their award, failed to win the prize, which fell to one Antoine Grison, a painter of whom no trace now survives. Watteau, whose supersensitive temperament brought him so much suffering in his after life, was bitterly chagrined at his failure. In his dejection he became estranged from his master Audran. The great capital he had so longed to see seemed no longer to command his allegiance and, weary of his surroundings, he once more packed up his belongings and set his face towards home, where he arrived in the autumn of 1709.

When he again returned to Paris in 1711 he made the acquaintance of M. Pierre de Crozat, a circumstance which marks the opening of the most fortunate period of Watteau's career. In 1712 he took up his abode in M. de Crozat's house in the Rue de Richelieu, where the great collector had gathered about him magnificent examples of the Italian and Flemish schools. Here he became acquainted with Lancret, who became his faithful pupil and imitator, and with M. de Julien and M. Mariette, both patrons of art and both ardent admirers of Watteau's talent. Another of Watteau's friends with whom he was brought into contact during his residence in the Rue de Richelieu was the Comte de Caylus,

who has written a life of the artist wherein he truly says of his subject: "He created a new world. A people came forth from his brain marked by caprice and elegance in a manner unknown before."

But despite this season of unbroken success it was not long before Watteau again fell a victim to the frailties of his own temperament. Quarrelling with his friends he gave up his quarters in the house of M. de Crozat and took an apartment in the house of M. Sirois, who had been his earliest patron. But his health already showed signs of failing, and to his health I think may be ascribed many of the weaknesses of temper and the oft-recurring seasons of melancholy that seem so strangely out of tune with the joyous spirit of his painting. It was for his health's sake that in 1719 he set out for London in order that he might consult the English king's physician, the celebrated Doctor Mead. His ten months' residence in this country, however, did little to help his recovery, and when he returned to Paris there was evidently little hope that his life could be prolonged for many years. Early in 1721 a fit of homesickness again took possession of him, and he made his plans to set out once more for Valenciennes. His doctor, however, forbade the journey, and he then retired to Nogent sur Marne, a pretty village near Vincennes, where, on the 18th of July, 1721, he died surrounded by his friends and pupils.

Watteau brought to the great task he accomplished almost every weapon that should find a place in the armoury of a painter. As a draftsman he possesses a sense of style that even in the rendering of the most trivial subjects never deserted him. His intuitive perception of those spontaneous motions of the body that in their enduring significance far surpass all declamatory gesture seem to give something of larger dignity even to the smallest of his gaily costumed figures. The separate motives of action are chosen with a sure command of the more permanent sources of artistic expression that even a sculptor might envy. And the beauty that he seeks and constantly attains is tested and fortified at every step of his progress by untiring reference to



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Wallace Collection.

THE FOUNTAIN, BY ANTOINE WATTEAU

Nature. Here his innumerable studies in red chalk, wherein he loves to register the momentary poise of the body as it passes from one movement to another, or the turn and carriage of an exquisitely fashioned head as it establishes in delicate line some unforgettable message of grace and charm, would alone suffice to set him far above the reach of rivalry in the kingdom that he had made his own. They prove to us that his unerring vision could pierce to the very core of life, even when it seemed to concern itself only with those lighter realities that play upon the surface. Nearly every one of his pictures for which these drawings were executed in patient preparation afford evidence of this great quality. The group in the foreground in *Les Amusements Champêtres* in the Wallace Gallery, the two figures to the right of the composition in *Le Menuet* of Mr. Briscoe's collection, the bending form of the lady who extends her hand to the little child in *Les Agréments de l'Été*, belonging to the Duke of Sutherland, the two retreating figures in *La Fête d'Amour* of the Dresden Gallery, the graceful dancer who occupies the centre of the composition in *Une Fête Venitienne* in the National Gallery of Scotland, and the action of the lady as she is about to dismount from her horse in *Le Retour de Chasse*, also to be found in the Wallace Collection, may be cited almost at random among countless other examples of his extraordinary power of seizing and recording fleeting attitudes of perfect and unconscious grace.

Watteau's landscape is in one sense as purely the product of artifice as the social environment in which his figures move. But the beauty of his rural scenes, while it frankly confessed its derivation from the mimic world of the theatre, is in essence as securely rooted in Nature as is the grace with which he has endowed the troops of gallants and their fair companions who recline upon those gently sloping lawns or move in the chequered shade of overarching boughs. And, within the limits he allowed himself, Watteau's landscape has all the freshness and variety of the gay throng it encompasses. Here, as elsewhere in his art, his vision moves at a measured distance from literal portraiture, but the delicate

threads that link it with reality, though they are finely spun, are never broken.

As a colourist, Watteau still stands supreme among painters of the French school. Without any loud note of revolution he suddenly lit up the overcast and murky atmosphere that had hung like a pall over the painting of the seventeenth century with a new radiance which, although it was wrested directly from Nature, bore the seal and stamp of the great art of Venice whose triumphs French painting had too long elected to ignore. To borrow the words of William Blake, he "scattered the dusk with silver": with silver or with gold, for his brush sought in turn the cool, argent tones of Paul Veronese and the glowing warmth of Titian and Giorgione. Apart from his confessed imitators like Lancret and Pater, there was only one of his younger contemporaries who gave any conclusive evidence of that native sense of colour that remains as Watteau's lasting glory. The talent of Chardin shows a humbler world for its exercise: a world as remote from Classic tradition as from the glamour of social life that partly captivated the spirit of Watteau; but in his studies of simple interiors where the housewife is shown engaged upon the incidents of her daily toil the vision of the colourist penetrates every detail of the chamber, leaving its message of beauty firmly printed even upon the common utensils of brass or copper that stand ready for use.

Watteau was surrounded by a little band of faithful imitators whose skilful appropriation of the external graces of his style is sometimes surprising. The two most eminent amongst them have been already mentioned, but even in the most successful productions of Lancret and Pater there is little that calls for separate criticism or analysis for, neither in artistic intention nor in the adroitness of their execution is there to be noted any marked enlargement or modification of the ideal established by their master. In one important particular Watteau's painting possesses a secret of distinction which his pupils, even in their happiest moments, fail to capture. It has been said of Van Dyck



Alinari Photo.

Louvre, Paris.

GRACE BEFORE MEAT. BY J. B. S. CHARDIN

that his art carries with it its own patent of nobility, conferring new rank upon his sitters irrespective of their individual claims; and as much may be said of that smaller world created by Watteau, whose inhabitants as they appear upon his canvas announce certain qualities of race and breeding that endow every gesture and movement with a nameless distinction of style belonging rather to the painter himself than to the generation he portrayed.

To pass from the art of Watteau to that of Boucher and Greuze marks a steep descent both in the taste of the time and in the gift of those who ministered to it. Watteau had been the dictator and not the creature of the little world he ruled, and those he addressed sought eagerly to appropriate the modes of his invention so as to bring their lives into harmony with his fanciful ideal. His two most eminent successors accepted a humbler rôle, surrendering themselves as willing slaves to the fashion of the hour. Their art became partly merged in that of the decorator and the upholsterer and they yielded themselves without protest to the changing caprices of the generation they served. The boudoir classicism of the former, whose facile and inexhaustible invention forced the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology to take their place in the retinue of royal courtesans, must have caused some of the graver spirits of the time to sigh regretfully even for the frigid classicism of the previous century. Philosophers like Diderot did indeed venture an occasional protest against Greuze's pictures of conscious innocence, an innocence beneath which there lurks something of the furtive allurement of precocious experience, but such protests counted for little with a generation that had definitely accepted these two painters as peerless exponents of the higher ideals of painting.

Both artists at an earlier stage in their career had paid a formal act of homage to the genius of Italy by the inevitable visit to Rome, but the pilgrimage was undertaken in a widely different spirit from that which had animated the generation of Poussin and Claude Lorraine. They returned to their native city, not as worshippers of the great



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Wallace Collection.

THE CONVERSATION GALLANTE, BY NICHOLAS LANCRET

achievements of the past, but as severe critics of a style they were, naturally, incapable of understanding. It is scarcely wonderful, therefore, to find that Boucher found Raphael "insipid" and Michelangelo "crooked in design and execution." At a period in the history of painting when it had finally renounced all endeavour to image the profounder spiritual truths of humanity it would have been wonderful indeed had he found them anything else.

In some of his earlier compositions Greuze took upon himself the responsibility of a teacher of ethics. In this he was only giving expression to a natural tendency of his time. A libertine age is apt to cling demonstratively to those moral precepts that find no echo in its conduct. The more lax the manners of an artificial state of society the firmer becomes its declared admiration for the blameless innocence of a primitive world. The jaded votaries of fashion are nearly always morbidly susceptible to the appeal made by the simple virtues of the poor; and to satisfy these cravings Greuze produced a series of pictures of peasant family life which despite their obvious artifice and insincerity caused his mentor, Diderot, to welcome him as a recruit in the service of a higher morality. When in 1763 Greuze exhibited *The Fruits of a Good Education*, the great philosopher was even moved to tears at the contemplation of such a naïve appeal in the cause of virtue.

But Greuze the moralist was not unmindful of the covert inclinations of his time. When he had exhausted the beauty that lay resident in the piety of the poor he turned to the interpretation of the separate virtues as they may be embodied in the appeal of individual features; and here he discovered a way of his own to satisfy the voluptuous cravings of a senile society whilst still maintaining the attitude of the teacher. The faces of his child women casting furtive glances at the world of which they are presumed to be ignorant and the beauty they embody, though professedly dedicated to a higher cause, retain traces of those allurements that might as plausibly be enlisted in the service of the senses. Such work, however insignificant as a contribution to serious



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Museum of Montpellier.

MORNING PRAYER, BY JEAN-BAPTISTE GREUZE

art, will never lack admirers. It will always be precious to those collectors of bric-à-brac, who while they are perilous guides along the broader highways of art, often show themselves alert and expert judges of that kind of polished perfection in execution which sets the painter's art in competitive companionship with the triumphs of the cabinet-maker. It so happens, therefore, that the languishing eyes that gaze on us through their tears from Greuze's enamelled canvases find fit companionship in the decorative features of the apartments they were designed to adorn. Their obvious emotional qualities do not strike too deep to disturb the equanimity of connoisseurs whose devotion is already pledged to the elegant accessories of furniture produced by the accomplished workmen of Louis Quinze and his successor. The art of Greuze will therefore always claim the kind of immortality that is ensured for the costly cabinets with which it is rightly associated.

Boucher makes an appeal that is more legitimately artistic. His painting was the outcome of a larger tradition, and his work as a decorator displays extraordinary fecundity of design even when its hold on nature is only too obviously failing. Whatever may have been his declared opinions of the earlier masters, we know well from the evidence of his work that he looked attentively at them all. The impress of Rubens' genius remained upon his art even when it had sacrificed all those more robust qualities that belong to the great Flemish painter; and under the inspiration of Rubens he had recourse again and again to the achievements of Venice and Florence, collecting with extraordinary deftness of appropriation just so much of the higher attributes of their invention as could be utilised for the lighter purposes of his design.

The measure of his regard for Nature is aptly illustrated in an anecdote that belongs to the later period of his career, when Sir Joshua Reynolds paid a visit to his studio in Paris. The English painter, who found him busily at work upon a large composition, expressed surprise at the absence of any model to support or correct the drawing of the numerous



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

THE TOILET OF VENUS, BY FRANÇOIS BOUCHER

Louvre, Paris.

figures assembled in his design. Boucher's reply was characteristic of his extraordinary facility and of the ever increasing artifice that characterises the work of his later years : In the period of his studentship, he explained, he had found models a necessity but, as he had advanced in power and resource, he had been enabled to dispense with them altogether.

That season of studentship had indeed been marked by much serious and assiduous labour. From his first teacher, Lemoyne, he acquired a certain mastery over the tools of his trade and, when he parted company with his teacher, he applied himself to the craft of engraving and for four years occupied himself almost exclusively in the reproduction of the works of Watteau and his less eminent contemporaries. This prolonged study of the master of Valenciennes failed, however, to reveal to him the secret of Watteau's authority. Boucher's treatment of the human figure, despite its avowed suggestion of Classic origin, was bereft of that intimate perception of the secrets of life and movement which lent magic to the lightest of Watteau's creations. In the region of colour it is even doubtful whether he could ever have understood the extent or nature of the revolution effected by Watteau's genius. It must, of course, always be borne in mind in judging this aspect of Boucher's painting that his employment as a decorator laid a definite limitation upon his palette. But Watteau no less than Boucher had spent much of his youth in the service of decoration, and yet in his case the conditions he had chosen to observe failed to arrest or impede the development of those gifts as a colourist that he had based upon the example of the great Venetians.

We must look elsewhere for the true survival of the higher qualities in painting which Watteau had been the first to introduce. The decay in the essential features of imaginative design led the stronger and saner spirits of the time to find refuge in the practice of portraiture. The pastellist La Tour, in his unfailing grasp of character and expression, is a more legitimate successor of Watteau than any of those among his contemporaries who, at first sight, would seem to



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Wallace Collection.

LE CHIFFRE D'AMOUR, BY JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD

make a more imposing appeal. A French critic has said of him that neither Van Dyck nor Franz Hals penetrated so deeply into the truths of individual character, and even if this be an overestimate of his powers, it is impossible not to recognise in his work and, in a lesser degree, in that of Nattier and Perronneau, gifts of a kind that were wholly absent from the fashionable productions of Greuze and Boucher. How great those gifts were, even within the domain of portraiture itself, may be the more fully realised in the presence of the later achievements of Madame Vigée Lebrun (1755–1842), where a kind of sentimentality that is partly an echo of the spirit of Greuze enfeebles and confuses the direct rendering of character.

The fabric of artifice and affectation which French painting of the eighteenth century owes mainly to the combined efforts of Boucher and Greuze was fashioned out of very perishable material. A movement to which Watteau's genius, in the season of its youth, had lent strength as well as sweetness developed in its florid maturity signs of decay that the secondary talent of his successors was powerless to avert. The ultimate collapse of such a structure was, in the nature of things, certain, and the forces born of the Revolution did no more than hasten the inevitable catastrophe. These new forces, however, in so far as art was concerned, at first only produced a new convention as rigid and artificial as that which it was designed to supplant. The ideals that are embodied in the painting of David (1748–1825) owned nothing of the warmth and fire that are indispensable elements in creative art; but in their cold detachment from life there was, nevertheless, enough of masculine austerity to destroy the declining influence of a school that was already on the verge of dissolution. At the touch of David's frozen fingers the roses of Boucher's paper paradise withered and fell to earth; and though Greuze's simpering maidens contrived to find their way across the blood-stained stage of the Revolution, their mock emotions ceased to enthrall a world that was engulfed in the maddened passions of the time.

And yet, as I have already hinted, the sterner temper of the hour was almost barren of sustained result in the region of art. The Classicism of the opening years of the seventeenth century had come to France as a direct inheritance of the Italian Renaissance. It had been begotten in a world of ideas that was dominated by the imaginative faculty. In its essence it was the outcome of art itself and still retained traces of that passionate quest of beauty undertaken by the newly liberated spirits of Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when they sought the road that led them to the long-forgotten triumph of the Art of Greece and Rome.

As compared with such a movement the Classical revolution that marked the closing years of the eighteenth century was a colder and more calculated importation; more extended indeed in its scope, for those who heralded it sought by the logical application of their ideas to cover the entire field of civil and political life: but in its essence inspired by forces that were intellectual rather than spiritual, depending upon a dispassionate appeal to the reason that deliberately ignored the higher claims of the imagination. Small wonder then that as an artistic influence it was sterile as well as cold. Beside the bloodless inventions of David even the poor remnant of that earlier Classic tradition that survived in Boucher has a living and sentient existence, and Fragonard (1732–1806) with his lingering graces of colour and design proves himself in his delicate creations the possessor of a voice whose appeal was destined to outlast the harsher Roman tones of his contemporaries.

The art of David, the accredited exponent of this later Classicism, is never likely again to awaken the enthusiasm that greeted its first expression. In his stern pursuit of generalised and abstract form the exhibition of individual character was no longer possible. It was not even desired; and under the influence of a spirit that sought in art a kind of repose that seems to anticipate the stillness of death, the quickened interpretation of human emotion was almost extinguished. It is indeed not a little surprising that an age

that was overswept by the unbridled impulses set free by the Revolution should, during the stress and fury of political convulsion, have applied itself to the perfecting of an art that made a colder appeal to the reason and was more completely detached from life than any the world had yet seen or is ever likely to see again. While French blood was deluging the streets of Paris, French art, bloodless and lifeless, had turned into a pillar of stone.

The experience of every school and of every epoch proves that imaginative art cannot live on the terms David sought to impose on his generation. An element of portraiture creeps unbidden into all ideal design that is genuinely inspired. Individual forms and features may be charged with an ideal message that ennobles and partly transforms them, but the saving sense of a living personality is never wholly effaced.

In the region of colour David's influence proved absolutely fatal to any further development of the movement initiated by Watteau. In the chill presence of his lifeless compositions we might almost fancy indeed that Watteau had never existed. Colour during the Revolutionary period fell even below the restricted triumphs sought by the masters of the seventeenth century. The narrow palette of Poussin and his successors, though it mirrored a sombre world that was overshadowed by impending night, did not exclude the promise of a warmer dawn; but the livid tones that David and his followers deliberately adopted carried with them the savour of mortality. It is to England, during this period, that we must look for the survival of any nobler tradition in colour, and there is indeed nothing produced in any other country during this epoch which can be fitly compared with the brilliant achievements of Reynolds and Gainsborough.

In this world of frozen ideals Prud'hon (1758–1823) holds a place apart in virtue of indisputable genius. So much of antique beauty as he was fitted to capture came to him by way of the Italian Renaissance. He forgot the sterner ethical message that David sought to enforce in loving and



Neurdein Photo.

Louvre, Paris.

ZEPHYRUS CARRYING OFF PSYCHE, BY PIERRE PRUD'HON

sympathetic study of Correggio and Leonardo; and although he failed to appropriate the charm of colour possessed by the former and fell far below Leonardo's grasp of spiritual truth, he exhibited in the essential qualities of his design and in his chosen system of chiaroscuro his ability to take advantage of the example of both. Even in Prud'hon's case, however, it is in his preparatory studies and drawings that we find the most satisfying evidence of his power. Colour as a vital element in art remained in abeyance during the whole of this period, and it would have needed gifts far transcending those Prud'hon could boast to have forged anew the link that might have successfully associated its claims with the sculpturesque ideals that were then in force.

It is not wonderful that this Classical outburst, mainly imposed upon art by the precepts of philosophers, should have enjoyed only a brief existence. During the course of the eighteenth century the study of classic beauty, when it had once disassociated itself from the lighter spirit of Boucher, had followed a course that clearly foreshadowed its ultimate failure. German criticism, which has so often and so completely misunderstood the processes of imaginative creation both in literature and in the plastic arts, had already set out with pedantic exactitude the lifeless gospel it falsely based upon the surviving monuments of antiquity. Winckelmann, its most eminent exponent, who died when David was only twenty years of age, has summed up in a few sentences principles regarding the nature of beauty which afterwards found melancholy exposition in the laboured compositions of his own countrymen, Overbeck and Cornelius. "Expression," he writes, "changes the features of the face and the posture of the limbs and consequently alters those forms which constitute beauty; the greater the change the more unfavourable it is to beauty." And again he adds: "A state of stillness and repose both in man and beast is that state which allows us to examine and discover their real nature and characteristics, and consequently even art can express her own peculiar nature only in stillness."



Altnart Photo.

DANTE AND VIRGIL IN HELL, BY EUGÈNE DELACROIX

Louvre, Paris.

This authoritative pronouncement, which is directly challenged by every great achievement in art from Phidias to Michelangelo, might serve as a fitting epitaph on the tomb of the Classic revival represented by the work of David and his associates. Their calculated assault upon ideals that had prevailed for the best part of a century became in its turn the object of violent counter-attacks by the representatives of the succeeding generation. The reaction was indeed swift and sudden. It sought no revival of the artifices David's sterner mood had condemned, for it was inspired by a spirit that was in its essence as convinced and serious as that of David himself. But it marshalled forces that were emotional and passionate in their origin against the intolerable restrictions which art had been condemned to endure under the frigid régime of the Classicists. The career of Eugène Delacroix constituted a sustained and vehement reassertion of the claims of liberty. He remained to the end of his life a convinced champion of the rights of the individual in art, not only setting himself in open conflict with the teaching of the schools, but rejecting with almost equal scorn the authority of nature. His confessed ideal was self-expression and he refused to recognise the purely representative functions of painting. According to this new gospel the interpretation of Nature must yield at every point to the imperious demands of the artist's soul: art was to have no other mission than that of providing the means of a purely lyrical utterance, and the myriad realities of the external world were to be accepted or rejected only in so far as they served to help or hinder the expression of those inner harmonies that were bound by no law save that provided by the soul of the artist.

In their essence these claims must always remain irrefutably true, and in so far as they are valid they constitute no new discovery. But in the stress of conflict they assumed an exaggerated form that became in itself a source of danger. The finest of Delacroix's pictures exhibited a sustained coherence between their component parts and an unbroken control, born of the single spirit in which they

were conceived, that are indispensable attributes of every satisfying product of imaginative invention. But the reaction was so sweeping in its scope and so violent in its exercise that it inevitably developed weaknesses of its own. This new Romantic movement was specially exposed to those perils that spring from the exclusive cultivation of individual temperament and even of individual caprice. Art, under the influence of its leader, developed a morbid hunger for the new and the strange. And Nature, over which he and his followers claimed an arbitrary control, in so far as its objective realities ceased to find faithful interpretation, failed to supply effective symbols for the expression of the changing phases of feeling into whose service it was forcibly pressed. In this aspect of his art Delacroix may even claim the doubtful honour of being the originator of "Originality." From his time onward to our own day this boasted quality has become the perilous objective of a horde of innovators who would seem desirous that art should rival the progressive advances of science. Originality is in no danger of going unrecognised in the work of those who truly possess it, but the history of the arts points to the conclusion that it is most loudly asserted in those barren seasons of invention when it is most rarely attained.

The heat and dust of battle generated by the onslaught of the Romanticists was not wholly favourable to true artistic development. The whispered plea of beauty is apt to be drowned in the din of conflict. It may be conceded that the revolution initiated by Gericault (1791–1824) and energetically maintained by Delacroix — a revolution that found a fainter echo in the less courageous experiments of Ary Scheffer and Paul Delaroche — did indeed avail to liberate French painting from the thralldom in which they found it; but their separate contributions to art, if they are to be rightly judged, must be disentangled from the circumstances of the crusade in which they were engaged. When this is done, — when, that is to say, the merit of their work is appraised solely on the strength of its intrinsic qualities, — it becomes more than doubtful whether the dispassionate



Levy et ses fils Photo.

ODALISQUE, BY JEAN AUGUSTE DOMINIQUE INGRES

Louvre, Paris.

award of time will confirm the larger claims that were put forward on its behalf by their contemporaries.

In the final phase of the struggle between the Classic and Romantic ideals it was under the banner of Ingres that the opponents of Delacroix's lyrical gospel definitely ranged themselves. Here the rebel leader found a foe more formidable than David, for Ingres, though he had been trained as a pupil in David's atelier, based his advocacy of the principles of severe design upon foundations in Nature and in art which his master in his whole-hearted devotion to the Antique had partly ignored. The first notable encounter between these distinguished opponents took place in the Salon of the year 1824 when Delacroix's *Massacre of Scio* was directly challenged by the *Vow of Louis XIII* exhibited by Ingres. This important picture, now in the Cathedral of Montauban, clearly separates its author from all those who had preceded him in the service of the Classic tradition. He had more of the inborn gifts of the painter than even Prud'hon could claim. He equally surpassed Prud'hon in a more complete surrender to the authority of Nature, while he exhibited, at the same time, a more liberal acquaintance with the great masters of the Renaissance and a stronger determination to base the ideal beauty that he sought upon the facts of individual form. As contrasted with that of his immediate rival Delacroix, his art showed an objective strength which the latter would not have acknowledged as belonging to the legitimate ambition of a painter. His inherent limitation, a limitation definitely announced in his ideal compositions, springs from a defect of poetic impulse. His design, more especially in the treatment of the nude, bears no convincing evidence that it has been conceived or fashioned in response to any inner call of the spirit. The harmonious arrangements he seeks and secures reveal the most conscientious compliance with ascertained law: they are laboriously and carefully fitted into moulds that survive as a legacy from the art of the past: but they are wholly lacking in those qualities of unexpected beauty that are the unfailing accompaniment of free organic growth.



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Pencil drawing in the Louvre, Paris.

PORTRAIT OF MME. DELORME, BY JEAN AUGUSTE DOMINIQUE INGRES

Some years ago I assisted in cataloguing a superb series of Ingres' pencil studies in portraiture which had been collected as part of one of the exhibitions of drawings by the old masters held at the Grosvenor Galleries, and in their presence I learned to realise why and how it was that such pictures as the *Odalisque* and *La Source* had never stirred me to unreserved admiration. Ingres, as these drawings most conclusively proved, was in essence a portraitist. His science in the treatment of the human form is sufficiently manifest in the paintings I have mentioned, but that science grows cold in its appeal exactly in the measure of its departure from a direct study of the individual. On the other hand the subtlety of his observation, accompanied by a spirit of the most unflinching veracity in the interpretation of the facts presented to him, glows with the warmth of genius when he is inspired by the beauty and character of the individual sitter and is not haunted by the remembered claims of ideal design. The painted portrait of M. Bertin in the Louvre shows how deeply then he could peer into the innermost secrets of Nature, but even this example of his finished work in colour falls far short of the fascination that belongs to almost every one of his pencil studies.

Meanwhile there had arisen, as in part the outcome of the Romantic movement, a school of painters who left to their leaders the larger contest which is unceasingly waged around the treatment of the human form, and were content to find refuge in the tranquil study of outward Nature. Delacroix as a colourist had been partly inspired by the new school of English landscape painters headed by Constable; and Decamps (1803-1860), whose personality was never wholly involved in the revolutionary movement, nevertheless, by his gifts as a colourist, and his research of special effects in Nature stands in some sense as the precursor of that larger and later development of landscape art which claims Corot as its master and its leader.

Corot (1796-1875) was by a few years Decamps' senior but in the spirit of his work he belongs to a later generation. Standing one day before a picture by Delacroix he remarked



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

SOUVENIRS D'ITALIE, BY JEAN BAPTISTE COROT

Louvre, Fatis.

to his companion : "C'est un aigle, — et je ne suis qu'une alouette ; je pousse de petites chansons dans mes nuages gris." The sentence expresses fairly enough certain natural elements of alliance between the two men, for the work of Corot, like that of Delacroix, aimed at a lyrical expression of the beauties that Nature reveals. But there was never any accent of rebellion in the delicate harmonies through which Corot's lyrical utterances sought expression. In one sense indeed he maintained to the end of his life a lingering affection for the Classic tradition in which he had been bred. Nymphs that own their Southern origin and bring with them the lingering echo of a vanished world float occasionally through the Northern mists whose beauty he loves to interpret ; but the Classic yoke is lightly borne, and the presence of these little figures in their unaccustomed surroundings is little more than a formal and fleeting act of homage to ideals that he never seriously pursued.

Born in Paris, Jean Baptiste Camille Corot came of a humble stock. His father and mother were both in trade, and the young artist himself began his career as an apprentice to a woollen-draper in the Rue St. Honoré. His natural inclination towards art, however, quickly asserted itself. After his first master, Michallon, had died he became the pupil of Bertin, a professor of historical landscape in the grand style. Possibly his Grecian nymphs were accepted as a pious inheritance from his master, of whose teaching, however, Corot had, apparently, no very high opinion. In speaking at a later time of the experiences of these earlier years he says that the days passed in Bertin's studio had taught him so little that on his arrival in Rome he was unable to complete the smallest sketch. "Two men," he writes, "would stop to gossip together. I would attempt to draw them in detail, beginning say with their heads ; they separate, and I am left with only two morsels on my paper. Two children would be seated on the steps of a church. I make a beginning, the mother summons them, and my sketchbook would be thus left full of the ends of noses and tresses of hair." His failure in the accepted modes of study

led him to adopt a different method: "I tried," he says, "for the first time to design rapidly and in masses: to circumscribe at a glance the first group that presented itself. If it only remained for a moment in position I had at least seized the general character; if it continued I was enabled to complete the details." Corot, it will be seen, was already striving to register an impression. The experiments to which he refers concerned only the treatment of human figures, but the truth of a single impression remained till the end of his life as the sole preoccupation of his art.

The "*petites chansons*" which serve as his own modest description of Corot's appeal to his generation were fashioned out of only a few notes, but those few notes, as he lived to prove, were susceptible of endless subtleties of modulation. As the winged chorister of his metaphor rises higher towards heaven, the panorama of the world below becomes simplified both in form and colour. The scenes it has quitted grow tremulous and uncertain in their fading outlines: the shapes of tree and pool and sloping hillside are only vaguely imaged while their varied tones are subdued and mastered by the encompassing cloudland his spirit loves to inhabit. Through the grey veil he lets fall over the facts of every chosen scene, the appeal of the separate and diversified hues of Nature is reduced nearly to monotone. And yet the appeal is enduringly that of a born colourist — a colourist of a gift so pure, and endowed with a touch so magical, that Nature seems to bear without protest the silver fetters in which his art enchains her. In looking at one of his landscapes wherein the tints of earth and sky are so subtly interlocked, the white fleecy clouds above blanching the green of leaves and grass and turning the mirrored surface of mere or river to their own likeness, we feel as though the face of Nature were as sensitive to passing emotions as the human countenance itself. The sense of portraiture in the scene scarcely survives; for the painter has caught in the sudden agreement of changing light and fleeting shadow a beauty that is almost independent of those particular features in landscape that attract the regard of men differently gifted.

The strong personal impress upon Corot's art sets it naturally in association with that of Delacroix, though the spirit and temper of the two men were sharply contrasted. It equally distinguishes his painting from much that was produced in the newly founded school of landscape painters in France. Corot was familiar with the works of our English Constable, who may be regarded as in some sense the true begetter of the new movement in French landscape art. In the Salon of 1821 Constable's picture, *The Hay Wain*, had created something like a sensation, and this was further confirmed by his *White Horse*, which was shown at Lille in 1825, but although Constable's introduction of the empire of the sky as a dominating factor in landscape composition made itself felt as a powerful influence in Corot's practice, in the inner spirit of their work they are shown to occupy positions divergent and even opposed. Constable's interpretation of the moods of Nature was in temper dramatic rather than lyrical ; he set the forces of Nature in motion and loved to stand apart and to interpret the varying fortunes of the conflict which ensued. In those battles of cloud and sunshine his art delights to register, colour is robbed of little of its pristine strength, and the association of opposing tones wins a resultant harmony that rests rather upon the skilful balance of the hues that are ranged upon his larger and more impartial palette than by the subjugation of them all to a personal mood of feeling. His feet remained always firmly planted upon the earth, while Corot loved to soar to the world of mist and cloud that descended upon it from above.

Although Corot was never definitely ranged as a member of the Barbizon school, his pre-eminent gifts set him naturally at the head of that group of French painters who made their home in the Forest of Fontainebleau. Here the unified spirit that characterises his painting was broken up into the separate activities of men who, in their varied endowment, acknowledged equally the naturalistic tendencies of the time. Georges Michel, who may be regarded as in some sense the precursor of the movement, had been content to find his subjects in the immediate environs of Paris, but the new and

wider outlook of those who followed him demanded more primitive and romantic surroundings capable of yielding larger harmonies both of tone and color. Over the spirit of Rousseau the Forest itself claimed a complete ascendancy. In its shady recesses he was content sometimes to forget or to ignore the authority of tone imposed by sudden and shifting changes of light and shade in his vigorous and varied study of the intricate growth of the trees that surrounded him. Diaz and Dupré, in one aspect of their work, pursued the same line of study, but both, on occasion, confessed the allurement of other ideals that, especially in the case of the former, took shapes that were fantastic rather than convincing. The work of Daubigny follows more definitely in the path that Constable's genius had explored. He loved open spaces and the gentle flow of tranquil rivers; he loved above all the unceasing passage of the overhanging clouds. Directly associated with this group are the animal painters, Charles Jacques and Troyon, whose special mission in art brings into new prominence problems that concern not merely the landscape but the toilers by whom it is inhabited.

Here the undisputed master of the time was Jean François Millet. The humble toilers of the fields had a long account to settle with French art in its many and various forms of expression. From the threshold of the seventeenth century poets and philosophers, the men of the theatre, decorators and costumiers, as well as painters and sculptors, had conspired to falsify the enduring facts of their existence. Watteau — not the worst but the first of the offenders — had purloined and partly transformed some of the sunnier external attributes of rustic life in order to furnish that fanciful Arcadia into which he transported the fastidious society of his time; but Watteau seems an uncompromising realist when compared with Boucher, in whose roseate vision of the loves of shepherds and shepherdesses there seemed neither time nor place for the graver occupations of husbandry. To this fantastic picture Greuze added the attractions provided by the poet and the moralist, flooding the simple interiors of the homes of the poor with a wave of un-



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

L'ANGELUS, BY JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET

Louvre, Paris.

restrained sentimentality which created in the jaded appetite of his generation a sudden desire to recapture the joys and sorrows of a primitive existence.

For these accumulated wrongs wrought by the amiable mendacities of his predecessors, the art of Millet made ample atonement. Entering with assured sincerity a world which art had as yet scarcely penetrated at all, he scattered with a pitiless hand the fragile structure which the painters of the eighteenth century had been at such pains to perfect. But the mission of creative art is never merely destructive. Out of his deeper vision of realities so long ignored Millet created a fuller and a graver picture of rustic existence that constitutes in its essential features a new and important contribution to modern art.

Jean François Millet was born in the little village of Greville, near Cherbourg, in the year 1815. By right of youthful association he himself belonged to that simple world he was destined to interpret. He had daily before him from his earliest childhood those stern facts of the peasant's existence so long neglected or travestied that it needed the insight born of genius to perceive they might be made the material for new discoveries of beauty both in form and expression. When he went from his native village to Paris he entered the studio of Paul Delaroche, where he found himself at once in incurable conflict with the aims of his master. The youth had already been brought face to face with the tragic issues in the lives of those to whom he afterwards devoted the service of his art, and it was, therefore, in the nature of things impossible that he could submit himself to such settled precepts of historical composition as Delaroche sought to impose upon his pupils. We hear of him even then that he used to be laughed at by his fellow students for talking too much and too often of the example of Michelangelo. What is significant for us now, in this declared preference for the art of the great Florentine, is that from the very heart of the Romantic movement there was to emerge under Millet's leadership a new appreciation of qualities of style that were supposed to be the exclusive possession of the

inheritors of the Classic tradition. It proves that already the young Millet was actuated by something larger and something better than the impulse of mere rebellion. He had in him the instinct to reconstruct the new material hoarded in his mind from his earliest childhood, and was not content merely to shatter the artificial edifice that stood condemned by the testimony of actual experience.

At this particular period of his career his residence in Paris was of only brief duration and after the exhibition of a portrait in the Salon of 1840 he quitted the capital, sojourning sometimes in his native village and sometimes in the small towns of the neighbourhood. His longest stay was at Havre, where he gained a livelihood by painting the portraits of the captains of merchant vessels. In 1843 we find him again in Paris, working side by side with Diaz, with whose feeling for landscape he found himself in natural sympathy. It was, however, some little time before he was sufficiently master of his means to establish his own individuality. This was first clearly announced in his picture *Le Vanneur*; it was firmly established by the exhibition in the year 1851 of *Le Semeur*, a work that not only determined the future course of his studies but vindicated by the austere qualities of its design his right to become the authoritative interpreter of the profounder realities of the hard life of the toilers in the field.

Le Semeur gives vehement and even passionate expression to truths that had been too long suppressed or misrepresented. It seems to sum up in a single image the long monotony of the labourer's life in its dull endurance of an unending task and its unvarying repetition of gesture and movement, until at last they attain to something of epic significance. As we gaze at the darkened figure we feel that the hand that scatters the grain has remained fixed in that unalterable attitude since first the inhabitants of the earth sought to make it minister to the wants of man. There is here neither ignorance nor shirking of any unwelcome truth. The rude outlines of the figure as he descends the hillside are not subdued by any imperious desire for elegance or grace; the

painter is content to wait till the inherent grandeur of the office the labourer discharges reveals its own secrets of beauty. Looking at the plan of the picture, the sloping lines of the dark hillside, sombre beneath the space of waning light that envelops it, it is gradually borne in upon us that this noble figure, even if the painter had owned no obligation of strict veracity, might have been chosen solely for its perfect fitness in the service of art. His advance across the barren landscape, persistent and yet unhasting, seems now to take new meaning. All sense of the individual labourer and of the pitiless yoke that his unending task imposes upon him is merged in the majestic image for which these things serve only as material. This single conscript drawn from the countless forces of labour, revealing in the fierce energy of his movement a spirit half rebel and half resigned to an inexorable fate, has led the painter to new discoveries in the dignity and beauty of human form. The sense of style born in him as an artist, and a long and deep familiarity with the facts he interprets, have here united without any trace of conflict for a single and harmonious impression.

It has sometimes been urged by way of criticism of Millet's genius that the dignity he affected to discover in the subjects of his contemplation was deliberately imported in obedience to an impulse that had its source not in Nature but in art. A sufficient answer to this objection is, I think, to be found in the drawings wherein he prepared himself for the larger task laid upon him in his finished compositions. In them not unseldom the persistent loyalty of his interpretation of the facts presented to him takes a form that is almost brutal in its utterance. That his vision was not absolutely impartial, that it leaned by natural inclination to aspects of his subject which chiefly reflect the graver mood of the painter is frankly confessed in his habitual treatment of landscape. Here as in the figures who inhabit it, Millet's art carries the message of reaction from the ideas he supplanted. It is for this reason not entirely urbane, but although he may be justly accused of ignoring some of the happier elements of rustic life, it is doubtful whether he

was ever guilty of softening or falsifying reality to serve the purpose of design.

Idyllic art — that art wherein the shapes of inanimate nature and the living forms of those whose lives are most intimately associated with it are ranged in such equal forces as to make a single and indissoluble appeal to the imagination — reached in Millet's hands a pitch of intensity only genius can achieve. The message it is intended to convey took a softer accent in the work of his successors. It no longer mirrors with the same conviction or authority that unending strife between man and Nature that Millet so deeply felt and so powerfully rendered. Something of the essential poetry born of the communion between the labourer and the scene he inhabits still lingers in the graceful art of painters like Jules Breton. But here, as in the case of so many others who tilled the same field, the victory is won on easier terms than those which would alone have satisfied Millet's uncompromising spirit. If we compare a picture like Breton's *La Glaneuse* with Millet's *Shepherdess*, where the lonely figure outlined against the wide stretch of flat plain is subdued by the heavy tints of an overcast sky, we shall recognise in the former that the art of the idyllic painter is already casting back longing glances at those conventions of styles it was Millet's chief aim to destroy. A note of reconciliation follows upon the signs of conflict that are everywhere evident in Millet's larger grasp of his material, and this is reflected again in Cazin's peasant subjects, despite a certain melancholy that pervades and inspires them. Bastien-Lepage who, on one side of his art, was largely preoccupied with purely technical problems of light and shade, betrayed a more masculine veracity in his choice of peasant types. There is even a suggestion of the brutalising influence of the occupations in which they are engaged that partly echoes the spirit to which Zola gave expression in literature. Their realism, however, in no essential aspect equals that of Millet, and everywhere lacks the imaginative insight that in Millet suffices to grant to the final result the seal of beauty.

Seekers after the picturesque in distant lands and in

times long past multiplied rapidly even before the first campaign between the Classicists and Romanticists had been brought to an end. David's reconstruction of the Civilisation of Rome found its source in a conception that was political and ethical rather than purely artistic. The study of classical costume it involved served, however, to awaken a new feeling for greater accuracy in detail in the region of historical painting. Henceforth archaeological knowledge with a more minute attention to truth of representation in costume and accessories was destined to play a more important part even in the representation of purely fanciful subjects. At the same time Delacroix's daring experiments as a colourist opened the way to a larger survey of lands that had been held hitherto as too remote or too unknown to attract the attention of contemporary art. His own journey to Morocco served to unlock a rich treasure-house of colour whereof the recesses had not yet been explored. Within more modest limits Decamps felt equally the magic of the Orient, and from this time onward French painting roamed freely among the unaccustomed realities provided by the costume and scenery of Eastern countries.

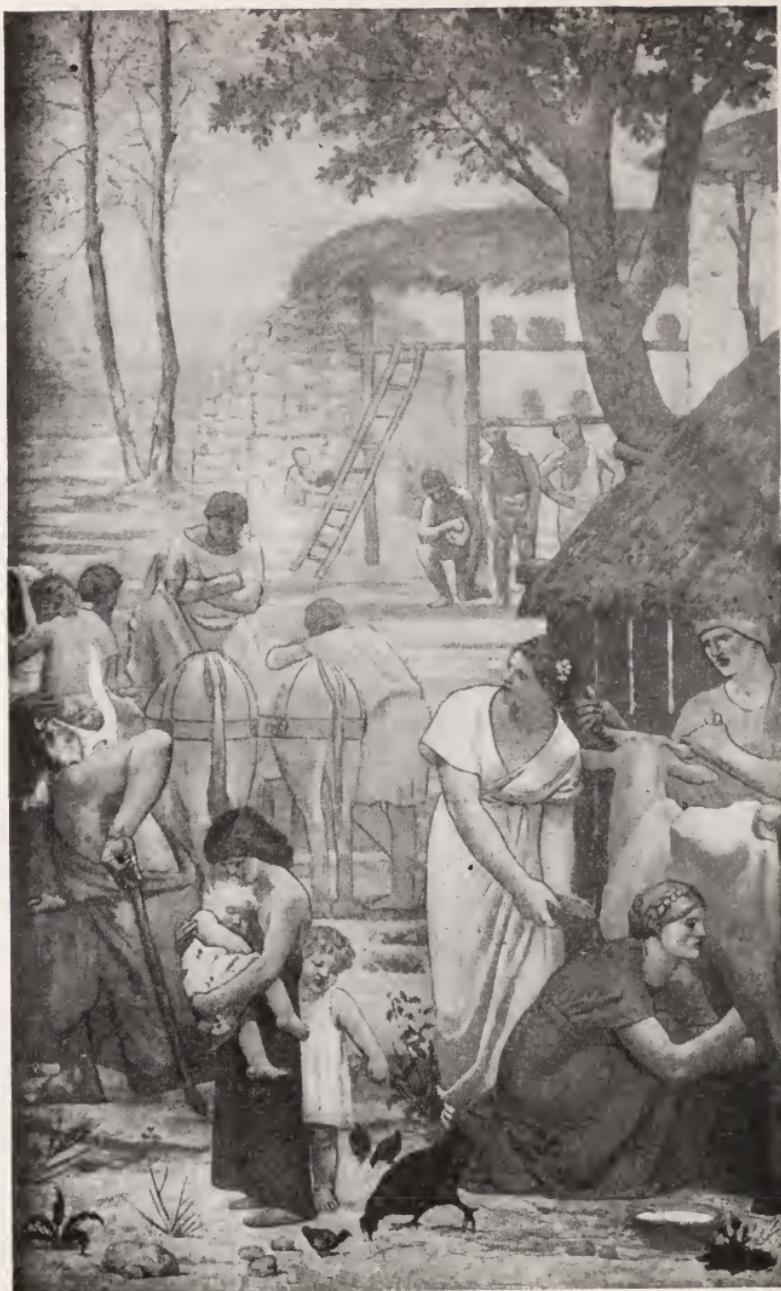
These influences gave a new meaning to historic painting, converting it more completely into an attempt to record with exactitude actual historic events. They equally made themselves felt in the region of decoration, a branch of painting which, owing to the liberal patronage of the State and the Municipality, has enjoyed an unbroken tradition in France from the beginnings of the seventeenth century. The persistent workings of an awakened historic conscience became a marked attribute even in the painting of *Genre* and is, perhaps, most strikingly manifested in the miniature masterpieces of Meissonier (1844–1891), who lavished upon the presentation of purely fanciful incidents and episodes a spirit of the most exact and conscientious veracity in the smallest details of the composition. The principles of academic design attracted, during the Second Empire, a host of accomplished workmen. Men like Jerome and Boulanger are partly divided in their allegiance to an ideal founded on



LA RIXE, BY MEISSONIER, IN THE ROYAL COLLECTION AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE. REPRODUCED BY
GRACIOUS PERMISSION OF THE KING

the worship of pure form and the newer attractions provided by archaeological research. Cabanel, Bouguereau, and Paul Baudry followed more contentedly the broad highway that had been marked out by the teaching and example of Ingres : while Henner, and in the region of portraiture, Ricard, followed partly in the footsteps of Prud'hon in so far as he had initiated the study of chiaroscuro that is evolved from the example of Leonardo and Correggio.

Puvis de Chavannes (1824–1898) stands alone in the attempt to clear a way for himself towards an ideal of beauty that differs in essential respects from that which any of his contemporaries pursued. Those who have closely followed the course of French art since the early seventies will know how tardy was the acceptance of his message even by the more cultivated section of the French public ; in the earlier days his great compositions, when they were not wholly neglected, were often the object almost of ridicule. The position he finally achieved was won by unswerving persistence in a course marked out for him by his own genius. For that title which is often too lightly bestowed sets him incontrovertibly in the chosen group that counts Poussin, Watteau, Chardin, and Millet in its ranks. In the spirit of his creation Puvis de Chavannes claims a natural alliance with the primitive painters of Italy, but whereas the simplicity of utterance to which they were compelled sprang in some measure from limitations of technical resources, in his case it is adopted by deliberate choice. Those who limit the field of their study to the masterpieces of French painting to be found in Paris can hardly form an adequate idea of the full scope of his invention. His great decoration at the Sorbonne and his series of illustrations of the life of Sainte Geneviève in the Panthéon do not, in my judgment, stand on the same level as his exquisite decorative panels in Marseilles and in Rouen. They sufficiently serve, however, to define the special characteristics of his painting. In them all it will be seen that the figures he creates are born into a world that is brought strictly into accord with the needs of his invention, a world that has not yet felt the pressure



Neurdein Photo.

Panthéon, Paris.

SCENE FROM THE LIFE OF STE. GENEVIÈVE, BY PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

of any passionate experience. Their association is always natural and often exquisitely graceful, but with a grace that does not own the need of energy in action. They would seem to belong to a state of existence that is as yet scarcely conscious of the part emotion plays in life. In their separate detachment they would appear to await the signal that should spiritually combine them, and in this expectant attitude they carry a message that echoes and images the stillness and silence of a primeval dawn. The dormant strength of his masculine figures is nicely balanced by the beauty in the female forms he associates with them, beauty that in the unconscious candour of its outlook reveals a soul still unpledged to any of the complex emotions that dominate a real world. His colouring is compact of the same simple elements that rule his design : faint tints, finely chosen and aptly assorted, image that evanescent hour wherein the forces of darkness are in retreat and the full glories of the dawn are not yet declared. Such work, the fruit of absolute harmony in all its elements, exercises a peculiar fascination of its own, and stands as an original contribution to the painter's art that reflects a strongly individual vision of Nature.

Between the opposing conventions of the Classicists and Romanticists, a new form of Naturalism found its birth in a movement that was headed by Courbet (1819–1877) and, at a later time, carried to a further stage of development by Manet (1832–1883). Both these artists affected to enlarge the discoveries made by Millet in the unexplored truths of reality, but both were equally lacking in that spiritual vision which could alone make their researches fruitful in the region of art. They laboured with honest conviction in the quarries of Nature, but the rough stone they brought away they were not able to transform into satisfying shapes of beauty.

Meanwhile another line of enquiry was being ardently pursued by painters specially preoccupied by problems of light and air that Courbet and Manet had never been able to solve. In the middle seventies Claude Monet, the centre of a group that included Sisley, Pissarro and Renoir, may

be said to have founded what is now known as the Impressionist school, a school wherein, in one aspect of his talent, Degas also finds a place. In the skilful juxtaposition of pure positive colours Monet aims at an effect of atmospheric truth previously only achieved by the subjugating influence of tone. His work, sometimes exquisitely beautiful, constitutes a real and substantial contribution to the resources of the painter's art.

THE IDEALS OF ENGLAND

THE IDEALS OF ENGLAND

THE history of painting in England precedes by more than a century the history of English painting. In the Middle Ages the work of the miniaturists employed upon the decoration of illuminated manuscripts had produced designs that were not only entirely national in character but of a beauty that found no rival in contemporary Europe. Some few examples of painting on a larger scale both in mural decoration and in detached panels still remain to us. Fragments of fresco in the nave of the Abbey Church of St. Albans give an indication of what was being attempted in the one direction, while the portrait of Richard II at Westminster and another picture of the same monarch with attendant saints at Wilton House prove by their excellence that under more fortunate conditions English painting might have developed on lines of its own. If the Reformation, with the Puritan movement by which it was followed, had not entirely crushed the exercise of the artistic spirit, the successive revolutions of style that were deferred to the next century might have more rapidly completed themselves, and the English school as we now know it would have had an earlier birth. But when the Reformation came, the imaginative impulse, as it sought expression in England, was diverted into a different channel. All the strength of our Renaissance found utterance in our literature. The stored beauty of the great cycle of Arthurian legend, to which the exquisite prose of Sir Thomas Malory in the closing years of the fifteenth century gave imperishable form, is left without any corresponding illustration in the region of the plastic arts, and even Spenser's Faery Queen, wherein we seem to recognise the spirit of the painter working in constant rivalry with that of the poet, has come down to us only as a picture in

words. For many generations to come literature was destined to absorb all the resources of creative imagination. Spenser's epic fancy was succeeded by the great outburst of dramatic invention that lends lustre to the later years of Elizabeth's reign, and the genius of Shakespeare, wherein the literary spirit found its highest and noblest embodiment, marks also most clearly the divergent methods of literature and art.

Under such influences it is not surprising to find that the aftergrowth of art in England is due to a foreign source. The fame of the great achievements of the painters of the Italian Renaissance had spread over Europe, and even in England we had great collectors and connoisseurs before we could boast of great artists. This newly cultivated taste failing to find objects worthy of its patronage among native born Englishmen was driven to seek satisfaction and support in the work that came from abroad. Before the Reformation had left its mark upon the English spirit Holbein had found a home at the English Court, and when the work of the Reformation was complete, or nearly complete, Rubens and his great pupil, Van Dyck, were invited to our shores. At a later period Van Dyck in his work in portraiture was succeeded by Sir Peter Lely, who in turn gave place to Sir Godfrey Kneller. It is true, no doubt, that at every stage of this foreign invasion there sprang up a certain number of native born Englishmen who sought to follow in the footsteps of each successive master. Examples of their work are many, though it is not always easy to identify their names, but even if we admit to the full the merit of individual works it still remains indisputably true that till the advent of Hogarth, England possessed no painter who can be said to rank among the acknowledged masters of the craft.

Hogarth's position is in many ways remarkable. He was not only the first of English painters, but the first painter working in England who discovered the means to make art a vehicle for the illustration of ideas. All those who had preceded him, whether of foreign or native origin, had concentrated their talents almost exclusively upon the art of

portraiture. Such exceptions as may be noted are not numerous and, save in one isolated instance, are not remarkable: and all of them belong to the art of decoration. Rubens' ceiling in Whitehall must have been, at the time of its completion, a noble achievement but, when we pass from this work of a master to Verrio's vacuous compositions at Hampton Court, we are prepared even to welcome the later essays in monumental design which bear the name of Hogarth's father-in-law, Sir James Thornhill. In none of these productions, or in any other less notable experiments in the same field, could Hogarth be said to have derived inspiration for the task he set himself to accomplish. His native gifts as a painter, no less than his revolutionary temperament, rendered him but little disposed to take over the lifeless formulas of an expiring tradition. We must, therefore, consider his painting as a wholly individual and independent contribution to English art and, whether we look to the force of invention it displays or to the matured technical resources he was able to summon to his aid, the result is surprising and even phenomenal.

For Hogarth's fame as a painter rests securely on qualities that are clearly separable from his powers as a satirist or as a student of the morals and manners of his time. He has been so long and so lavishly praised for the gifts he possessed in this direction — gifts which might still have left him without any claim on the consideration of the student of painting — that the purely pictorial appeal of his art has been insufficiently recognised. And yet this appeal is amply strong enough to support his reputation even when we put on one side every other element of attraction. Comparing him with the gifted group of artists who, although they were his contemporaries, were his juniors by more than a generation, he is well able to hold his own by whatever standard his attainments be measured. As a colourist he is markedly the superior of Romney, and in subtlety of tone, in the power of delicately adjusting the relative strength of neighbouring tints, and of submitting them all to a chosen effect of light and shade, he need not fear competition either



GARRICK AND HIS WIFE, BY WILLIAM HOGARTH, IN THE ROYAL COLLECTION AT WINDSOR. REPRODUCED BY GRACIOUS PERMISSION OF THE KING

with Reynolds or Gainsborough. Nor is his authority in portraiture, displayed in his assured grasp of individual character, unworthy to rank with theirs. The group of *Garrick and his Wife* at Windsor and *The Shrimp Girl* in the National Gallery show how complete was his command of vivacious expression. Other examples might be cited which reveal his full sympathy with the graver moods of his sitters, though it is not to be pretended that he possessed the penetrating vision of Reynolds or the indefinable grace that accompanies Gainsborough's quickened perception of the subtleties of feminine temperament. His powers, when they are shown at his best, were of another sort, and his interest in humanity was dramatic rather than biographical. In the art of presenting the contrast and conflict of emotion within the accepted limits of the painting of Genre, he had indeed in his own country no predecessor and no rival; and even when his work in this kind is set in comparison with that of the great Dutchmen, Jan Steen alone can be said to be his superior in the veracity and variety with which he interprets the emotional truths of the particular theme selected for illustration. But this ability to present the facts of social drama would have served neither the one nor the other unless both had been able to prove by their work that painting was fitly chosen as the vehicle for their expression. And it is just here that Hogarth's claims have been so often misunderstood and so persistently undervalued. "As a painter," wrote Walpole, "he had but slender merit," and although time has reversed this crude and hasty judgment, it is not even yet sufficiently recognised not only that his painting displays qualities of exquisite refinement but that these qualities are the direct outcome of his genius as an illustrator. In his case again we have to recognise that it is under the pressure of ideas calling for utterance that the qualities of pictorial art, independently considered, are often most successfully developed. Hogarth, in common with the great Florentines, with whom in this respect his talent claims a natural affinity, had always a story to tell, and although it was not their story and did not, therefore,

evoke the same high qualities of style in design, his work claims equally with theirs the indispensable elements of simplicity and sincerity. His was the first genuine essay that had been made by English art to forge out of lines and colours the means of expressing a definite intellectual conception. His ideas did not rise to sublimity and his purely technical resources confessed the limitations imposed by his subject, but even where the theme is mean and vulgar the result is often saved from insignificance by the beauty and delicacy of the painting. His work is best known to the English public by the *Marriage à la Mode* in the National Gallery, but in *The Rake's Progress*, now in Sir John Soane's museum there are individual passages of painting that betray even greater delicacy and beauty.

Apart from his own accomplishment it must never be forgotten that, through his initiative and example, the door was thrown open to every form of imaginative invention in painting. And yet, for many years to follow, his courageous adventure remained almost without influence upon the practitioners of the English school. The great work he accomplished remained as an isolated effort of genius in his own time and for long after his own time. There was no one then ready to explore the path he had discovered, and it was not till the century was drawing to its close that we meet with another artist equally convinced and equally isolated who strove with no less courage and persistence to win recognition for the painting of ideas. I shall have, a little later, to speak more in detail of the genius of William Blake, but it is of interest here to place his name beside that of Hogarth because, although the conceptions they sought to illustrate stood as far as the poles asunder, the revolution they both tried to effect was in its essence identical. The right of the imagination to enter the realm of pictorial art, they both in their separate spheres did their utmost to vindicate; and in this respect their names may fitly be placed side by side as representing the two most notable revolutionary forces in English art during the eighteenth century.

David Wilkie (1785–1841), whose career extends far into



National Gallery.

THE COUNTESS'S DRESSING ROOM, BY WILLIAM HOGARTH

W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

the next century, was the first of his successors to take advantage of Hogarth's discoveries in the field of Genre painting, but Wilkie, admirable as his own work often is, must be held responsible for having introduced into painting a kind of sentiment that vitiated so much of English art in the generation that followed his. Hogarth had made no secret of the moral purpose that inspired his work, but his native gifts as a painter happily saved him from the pitfalls that awaited others less fortunately endowed. And it remains equally true of Wilkie, despite his confessed reliance upon the anecdotic interest of his compositions, that his mastery of his craft is in itself sufficient to claim for him an enduring place in the English school. By certain of his contemporaries and even by critics of a later day he has been acclaimed as the equal of Teniers or of any of the little masters of the Dutch school, Mr. Woolner, among the latter, even going so far as to declare that the sense of movement evident in Wilkie's design finds no expression in the work of his predecessors in Holland where "although the figures represented are living figures they are silent and still and will remain still and might so remain forever." Such a judgment, however, argues a somewhat superficial appreciation of the qualities of the best of the Dutchmen for, to take only Jan Steen and Vermeer of Delft, it is surely manifest that whether we consider the dramatic power possessed by the one or the exquisite skill in the delineation of simple and unconscious movement displayed by the other, there is nothing in Wilkie's art which records any advance upon these earlier achievements.

Among other painters who attached themselves to the study of Genre painting we may note especially Thomas Webster, who is most nearly allied to Wilkie in quality of sentiment, C. R. Leslie, and George Clint. The last named painter is not represented at all in the National Gallery, and for a due appreciation of his talent the student must have recourse to the private collection of paintings in the possession of the Garrick Club. Like Hogarth, he was in close touch with the art of the stage, but his accomplishment as

a painter, more especially exhibited in the purity and brilliance of his colour, secures to him his rightful place in our schools apart from his powers in dramatic illustration.

If Hogarth exercised no immediate influence upon the growth of the English school, the reason is to be found in the ascendancy of the art of the portrait painter — an ascendancy established before his time and destined long to outlive him. Portraiture is, in fact, the capital achievement of English painting during the eighteenth century, and Sir Joshua Reynolds stands out as its foremost exponent. The pre-eminence conceded to him by contemporary judgment has not been assailed by time. His place at the head of the English school is still undisputed; he still remains uncontestedly the greatest portrait painter our country has produced, as he was indisputably the most gifted colourist in Europe during the period in which he practised his art. And yet in the season of his youth it was not towards the practice of portraiture that his ambitions inclined him. There is indeed something peculiarly touching in the confession of faith with which he closes his last discourse to the students of the Royal Academy. The occasion is the annual distribution of prizes in December of the year 1790, and he is speaking of the greatest of the Florentines whom he so constantly worshipped and so little resembled. “It will not,” he says, “I hope be thought presumptuous in me to appear in the train, I cannot say of his imitators, but of his admirers. I have taken another course, one more suited to my abilities and to the taste of the times in which I live. Yet, however unequal I felt myself to that attempt, were I now to begin the world again I would tread in the steps of that great master: to kiss the hem of his garment, to catch the slightest of his perfections would be glory and distinction enough for an ambitious man. I feel a self congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect, not without vanity, that these discourses bear testimony to my admiration of that truly distinguished man, and I should desire that the last

word which I should pronounce in this Academy and from this place should be the name of Michelangelo."

These eloquent sentences were indeed the last public utterance of their author. Within fourteen months of the time of their delivery Reynolds died peacefully at his house in Leicester Square congratulating himself, as Burke tells us, on a "happy conclusion of a happy life." Even at this date his career as a painter was already at an end. He had entirely lost the sight of one eye and could no longer work at his easel. In January of the same year, writing to Sheridan, who had asked to be allowed to purchase the beautiful picture of Saint Cecilia, for which the dramatist's lovely wife had served for model, Reynolds had himself announced the termination of his life's labours. "It is with great regret," he says, "that I part with the best picture I ever painted, for though I have every year hoped to paint better and better, and may truly say *nil actum reputans dum quid super-esset agendum* it has not always been the case. However, there is now an end of the pursuit: the race is over whether it is won or lost."

In one sense Reynolds must have well known that the race had been won. As he observed to Malone, he had painted "two generations of the beauties of England" and painted them in such a way that we think of them now chiefly in connection with his name. In portraiture, the only branch of art that had any real vitality during the time in which he lived, he was without a rival either in England or on the continent, and yet in thinking of his great fame it is impossible not to be reminded of those quoted words of his in which he has set down for us not only an image of what he was but a record of what he had wished to be. In common with every artist of fine temper, Reynolds' vision of beauty far transcended the limits of his own accomplishment. It must not, however, be concluded that the larger ambition of his youth remained without influence upon his own individual practice. His occasional incursions into the region of ideal design need not in themselves be rated too highly. They serve for the most part only to



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Wallace Collection.

MISS NELLY O'BRIEN, BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

mark the essential limitation of his own gift, and thus prove to us that in the course he had marked out for himself his instinct was just and true. It is in his practice as a portrait painter that the happy results of his youthful preference for the great masterpieces of creative art are most clearly revealed. There is in all his work a certain modesty of temper as of a mind very deeply conscious of a style transcending his own. If he is more constantly and deeply fascinating as a painter than even the greatest of his contemporaries, it is because he had in him more of the spirit of the student. He was searching always and to the end : he has little of the mannerist because he has none of the settled confidence of style which begets mannerism : at each new subject he is moved to new effort and experiment ; and though the measure of his success is not always the same, even his failure is not the failure of audacity or self-assurance.

From the qualities of temperament that make this apparent in his work we may partly understand how it was that Reynolds was so much beloved as a man. Even without the recorded opinion of his contemporaries we should be prepared, upon the evidence of his paintings alone, to meet in their author a mind at once simple and sympathetic, gentle and sincere. There must have been something of the heart of a child in one who could so win upon children as to wrest from them the secret of their unconscious grace and charm : something also of the tenderness of a woman in a painter who could induce the mothers of these children to confide to him those unrestrained and exquisite images of maternal fondness that are the peculiar property of his art. We must go back to that time in the art of Italy when this elemental human relationship was deeply and constantly studied under the influence of religious impulse and tradition to find a match for the sentiment that inspires these family groups by Reynolds, for in this respect no one of his contemporaries was in any sort his equal.

In his separate studies of children he is no less successful, and he may be said indeed to have been the first to have established the interpretation of childish character as a

separate branch of portraiture. One of the very last pictures upon which he was engaged at the time when failing eyesight put an end to his labours was the delightful composition of little Miss Frances Harris with a dog, and we know that he himself reckoned the picture of the Strawberry Girl as one of the few original works he could claim to have produced. Reynolds must have been keenly appreciative of the tacit alliance existing between young children and dumb animals, for a succession of canine favourites, whom we may suppose to have been resident in his studio, make repeated appearances in his pictures. The skill with which he availed himself of their services in finding new motives in the action and gesture of children is illustrated in perfection in the picture of little Miss Cholmondeley carrying her dog across the brook, exhibited many years ago at the Grosvenor Gallery. Nothing could be more delicately rendered than the expression of the drooping eyelids and parted lips as she puts forth all her strength to support the weight that strains upon her slender arms; nothing again more quietly humorous in its effect than the happy contrast between the child's evident anxiety and the smug contentment imaged upon the face of the pampered favourite.

Dogs of varied breed succeeded one another in orderly succession during the whole of his career; when the rule of one has come to an end another takes its place and is installed as the painter's resident assistant. The first of the race that we meet with in his paintings is the Italian greyhound in the picture of *Lady Cathcart and Her Child*. His brief reign was succeeded by that of an impudent little Scotch terrier who, very properly, makes his début with Mrs. Abington in the year 1764 and is found as a constant attendant for some time to come. His features may be recognised again in the portrait of Miss Lister of the same year, and in the group of Lady Spencer and her daughter of the year 1769, and yet again in the half-length of Miss Vansittart painted in 1773. The larger and more dignified animal who figures in the portrait of little Miss Harris may be identified as the same dog who accompanies the shepherd

boy in the design for one of the windows at New College and who re-appears once more as the companion of Master Philip Yorke.

I have already alluded to the exquisite results obtained by Reynolds in the happy association of the mothers of the time with their children. Two capital examples in this kind are the fascinating group of Lavinia Countess Spencer with her little son by her side and of Georgiana Spencer with her daughter. The series of portraits at Chatsworth and Althorp from which these illustrations are drawn form in themselves almost a complete family history, and we are reminded in looking at them of the truth of Reynolds' boast that he had painted two generations of English beauties. The little girl who stands on the table held in her mother's arms, in the second of these two compositions, could hardly have dreamed that she would one day be known as the "famous" Duchess of Devonshire, and the painter himself perhaps did not then suspect that seventeen years later he would meet her again with her own child upon her knee and make out of the picture that presented itself to him a composition destined, it may be, to be more famous than the Duchess herself.

It is very interesting to mark the gradual transition and development of Reynolds' style between the one portrait and the other. Much had been achieved in the interval: a richer and more brilliant system of colouring; greater ease in composition and a quickened power of seizing and registering those spontaneous and momentary truths of gesture which are of the very essence of the highest artistic achievement. In all these attributes of his art Reynolds was constantly advancing even to the very close of his career, but in some of his later portraits, though not especially in this, we miss something of that directness and simplicity in perception, something also of the clearness and sharpness of definition which gives the charm of perfect sincerity to his work of the time when he first painted the Duchess as a child. The tendency towards a sort of vagueness of individualisation which was an ever present danger in the

art of the eighteenth century and proved absolutely fatal in the field of imaginative design was not always or wholly excluded even from the safer realm of portraiture. And from this comes the seeming paradox that whereas Reynolds' so-called poetical compositions fail mainly because they are in essence only portraits in masquerade, yet the one element of occasional weakness in his work in portraiture springs out of a temptation to generalise upon individual facts and thus to weaken the sense of objective reality.

It so happens that the series of portraits at Althorp comprises some of the finest specimens of Reynolds' art at the most interesting periods of his career. Later in date than the picture mentioned above, but still belonging to a time when his resources as colourist had not yet been fully developed, comes the full length of Lord Althorp painted in 1776. A few years later this young man was to wed the beautiful Lavinia Bingham, whose well-known portrait, with the face half shadowed by a broad-brimmed hat, belonging to the year 1782 decisively marks a further advance in the painter's command of his resources. Then follows the head of the same lady painted shortly after her marriage, and then two years later she reappears in the picture with her little son that has already been mentioned. Here the painter is seen in the plenitude of his powers and it may be doubted whether, so far as colour is concerned, his work was at any time so rich or so splendid. It was the year of the Tragic Muse which, despite the counter-attraction of much else that we have learned to know and admire, still stands out as in some sense the capital achievement of his life. His colouring at this period is Reynolds' sufficient vindication of all those luckless experiments and failures in the use of his material upon which, perhaps, too much stress has been laid. For in whatever way the result has been accomplished, it is unquestionably true that he here approaches nearer to the mellow splendour of the Venetian painters than any other artist of his time either in England or abroad.

Side by side with the Tragic Muse may be set the beautiful picture of Saint Cecilia which Sir Joshua in the words



Braun Photo.

SAINT CECILIA, BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

already quoted described as "the best picture I have ever painted." Eliza Ann Linley, whom Sheridan had but newly wedded when Sir Joshua first made his acquaintance, possessed a kind of beauty and charm that must have powerfully appealed to Sir Joshua. She had a way, as we are told, of "gathering little children about her and singing them childish songs with such a sweetness of look and voice as was quite enchanting." The painter may often have seen her so employed at the musical parties of his friend, Mr. Coote, and it may be that in his painting of Saint Cecilia he was merely reproducing a lovely reality. If it were so it would take nothing from the praise that is due to its author, for to re-create a reality so delicate and so refined and to re-endow individual features with the exquisite charm that they exercised in actual life implies in the heart and mind of the painter qualities akin to those he seeks to interpret. When portraiture reaches to such a level as this it transcends its category, and we are made to feel in its presence that only the highest order of imaginative invention in art can claim to share its throne. The larger spirit Reynolds brought to the particular task to which he devoted his life is aptly indicated by Edmund Burke in the tribute he paid to him immediately after his death: "He communicated to that description of the art in which English artists are the most engaged," he says, "a variety, a fancy, and a dignity derived from the higher branches which even those who profess them in a superior manner do not always observe. In painting portraits he appeared not to be raised upon that platform but to descend to it from a higher sphere."

It is curious to reflect that a man who lived to win this warm tribute from the most distinguished of his contemporaries was at one time destined to fill a very humble sphere in life. In the year 1740 Joshua, as his father expressed it, was drawing near to seventeen and it was, therefore, urgently necessary that he should make the choice of a career. The elder Reynolds was himself a clergyman and the head-master of the Grammar School at Plympton in Devonshire, but he seems also to have dabbled a little in

medicine and to this fact is, doubtless, to be ascribed the idea he had of apprenticing his son to an apothecary. Reynolds had already made some boyish experiments in drawing, and the scope of his ambition was clearly revealed in his answer to his father that he "would rather be an apothecary than an ordinary painter, but if he could be bound to an eminent master he should choose the latter." The "eminent master" was found in the person of Thomas Hudson who, after the retirement of his teacher, Jonathan Richardson, occupied the foremost place among the portrait painters of his time.

After the period of his apprenticeship with Hudson had been brought to a close Reynolds set out for Italy; and there are to be found in the Print Room at the British Museum two of his sketch books which bear ample evidence both of the direction of his taste and of the particular masters of Italy whom he, at that time, found most deserving of study. The written notes in these two manuscript volumes are almost wholly concerned with reflections suggested by the masterpieces that came under his notice. Amongst the drawings, however, are to be found occasional indications of his own constant reference to nature. Here and there amidst reproductions of the compositions of Italian painters we come upon slight but vivid studies of form and expression drawn from the living model. With his return from Italy the period of Reynolds' studentship may be said to have been brought to a close.

The wide range of Reynolds' vision as a portrait painter had had no parallel in the earlier record of painting in England. In variety of characterisation, in the sympathetic grasp of the contrasted attributes of sex and of every changing phase of life from infancy to old age, he is not only clearly the superior of his great predecessor Van Dyck but remains to this day without a peer in our own school. I have dwelt especially upon his treatment of beautiful women and young children because that is an aspect of his genius that has sometimes received less than its due meed of recognition. Of the virile qualities of his art in the interpretation



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

LORD HEATHFIELD, BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

of masculine character there is the less need to speak, for in the long list of his male portraits he has held up a mirror that reflects for us with incomparable power the features of the most remarkable men of his time: Garrick and Goldsmith, Johnson and Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, the great Lord Heathfield, and Gibbon, to cite only a few names among many, are as living for us to-day as they were to their contemporaries, chiefly because they have been immortalised by the genius of Reynolds.

It is no small tribute to the innate gifts of Gainsborough that, despite the fame of his great contemporary, he holds and will always hold a distinctive place of his own. It has already been noted how, with the final overthrow of the great tradition of design established by Florence, the master currents in the painting of later schools have set in the direction of portrait and landscape. Gainsborough was the first of English painters to unite in the practice of a single individual these two distinct branches of his art. We have seen how the haunting regret of Reynolds' career sprang from the consciousness that he had failed to follow those ideals in art he most highly prized. Gainsborough's regrets, long after he had achieved fame as a portrait painter, were, perhaps, equally poignant, though of a different kind. In the full tide of his successes in Bath or in London his thoughts must often have wandered back, not indeed to those achievements of an earlier time upon which the gaze of Reynolds was fixed, but to the pleasant scenes around his Suffolk home wherein his boyhood had been passed and from the beauty of which he had first derived inspiration as a painter. "Gainsborough's landscapes," says Sir William Beechey, "stood ranged in long lines from his hall to his painting-room, and they who came to sit to him for their portraits rarely deigned to honour them with a look as they passed them." But although neglected in their day these charming visions of natural scenery stand out clearly to us now as constituting the sure foundation of a branch of art that is everywhere recognised as characteristically English.

The separate preoccupations of these rival spirits make

the comparison of the genius of Reynolds and Gainsborough when they meet on the common ground of portraiture peculiarly interesting. Gainsborough's rather special gifts in the rendering of the finer truths of form and expression in the human countenance are such as might naturally be anticipated from one who had learned the first principles of his art in direct communion with the beauties of outward Nature. He interpreted a lovely face or a graceful form in some sense as he would have painted a landscape, dwelling first and last upon the picturesque aspect of his subject and not searching too anxiously to probe the deeper realities of character. Thus it happens that his pictures have often less intellectual weight than those of his great contemporary, while at the same time they exhibit a swifter and more delicate power of apprehending and arresting those passing subtleties of expression that find their parallel in the changing moods of external Nature. His pictures register with greater felicity transient graces of gesture that would sometimes escape the more serious student of character, but as an inevitable compensation we have now and then to acknowledge that he fails to penetrate so deeply beneath the surface of his subject, and that his sitter tells us too little of that life beyond the canvas which Reynolds, without violating the inherent conditions of his art, constantly contrives to suggest.

It follows naturally that Gainsborough is seen to better advantage in his portraits of women than of men: that he is more successful in presenting aspects of beauty than in the record of character. His picture of Mrs. Siddons in the National Gallery may be taken in illustration of what has been said. When Reynolds came to paint the famous actress it was natural to him to enforce the appeal of mere portraiture by an environment which suggests the claims of her own art, whereas, in Gainsborough's masterpiece, the actress appears only as a graceful and charming woman with little suggestion of intellectual supremacy and nothing to remind us of her illustrious career.

The circumstances of Gainsborough's life are only in a



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

Wallace Collection.

MRS. ROBINSON, BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

minor degree illustrative of his career as an artist. Reynolds lived among the men whose faces he has preserved for us; he was interested in all the intellectual movements of his time, and was received on a footing of equality by the brightest wits and the keenest intellects of his generation. Gainsborough too loved society, but his part in the great world, many of whose notabilities form the subjects of his pictures, depended exclusively upon his artistic claims. The painter's father, John Gainsborough, was a trader in the little town of Sudbury in Suffolk. It is supposed, as one of his business enterprises, that he carried on a contraband trade with Holland, a fact of no moment in itself except in so far as it supports the suggestion that through the old man's visits to the Low Countries his son may have become familiar with examples of Dutch art. It is at least certain that in his earlier experiments in landscape there is unmistakable evidence of some acquaintance with the methods of the Dutch masters.

How strong was his inclination during this period of boyhood towards the study of outward Nature is made evident from a remark of his own made at a later period of his career. Speaking of his school days he is reported to have said : "There was not a picturesque clump of trees, nor even a single tree of any beauty, nor hedgerow, stem, or post" for miles around his native home that was not accurately imprinted upon his memory. His father, recognising the determined bent of his mind, sent him at the age of fifteen to London to complete his artistic education. Not much is known in regard to his course of study there save that he was befriended by Gravelot, the engraver, through whose good offices he was admitted to the St. Martin's Lane Academy, whence he ultimately passed to the studio of Frank Hayman. He evidently recognised for himself that there was no present chance of patronage for his work in landscape, for after an apprenticeship of three years he set up as a painter of portraits in a studio in Hatton Garden. But even for the practice of portraiture his time had not yet come, and in 1745 he was forced to quit London and return

to his native town. There at the early age of eighteen he married the beautiful Miss Burr. The young couple at first occupied a cottage at Ipswich, but in 1754, on the advice of his biographer, Philip Thicknesse, he took up his residence at Bath.

From the time of his arrival in the great watering-place of the West, Gainsborough's success was never in doubt. He was then thirty-three years of age and his artistic gifts were already fully developed. Nor was the reputation he won there merely local. In our time it would scarcely be possible for a painter of Gainsborough's ambition to remain fourteen years in a provincial town, but it must be remembered that we have now no provincial town of the rank which the fashionable society of the eighteenth century chose to assign to Bath. Thither the bright world of London was wont, every season, to betake itself: in a social sense it formed an integral part of the capital; and a painter or a musician who had succeeded in winning favour from its visitors might rest assured that he was on the highway to fortune. This is sufficiently shown by the fact that even before he quitted Bath Gainsborough had become a favourite of the Court and a member of the newly formed Royal Academy. He seems, however, at no time to have greatly concerned himself with the proceedings of this august body. Though for many years a constant contributor to its exhibitions he attended no meetings of the society and held no office therein. At one time indeed the Council were of a mind to strike his name off the list of members, but happily for its own reputation this foolish resolve was never carried into effect. It is evident that his relations with his brother academicians were not fortunate for he had more than once to complain of the places assigned to his pictures, and in 1784 he finally retired from the list of its exhibitors. An element of rivalry with his great contemporary, Sir Joshua, may have entered into his constant disputes with the body to which they both belonged, but if this was so it is pleasant to record the fact that on his deathbed he sent for Reynolds, and his last words, which must always remain memorably touching and pathetic,

were whispered into the ear of one who could not consciously have done injustice to him or to any man — “We are all going to heaven, and Van Dyck is of the party” — such was Gainsborough’s simple leave-taking of the world in which he had played so prominent a part.

There is no other portrait painter of the eighteenth century who deserves to rank with Reynolds and Gainsborough. The name of Romney is commonly bracketed with theirs but the conjunction cannot be taken to imply equality of power either in the appreciation of character or in purely pictorial gift. As a colourist Romney was so markedly inferior to both that on this score alone his art must be relegated to a lower category. In one respect, however, he has claims of his own that carry no suggestion of competition with either of them. In all his work despite its occasional weakness, there is a pervading sense of a kind of style that clearly distinguishes it from that of either of his great contemporaries. It was differently derived and owned a distinctive ideal. The style of Reynolds, as he would have freely confessed, rested on his enduring attachment to the great masters of the Italian Renaissance. Gainsborough, despite his life-long veneration for the genius of Van Dyck and his study and knowledge of the works of Titian, Velasquez, and Rubens, attested by the copies he executed of chosen examples of their work, owed less to tradition than any of the three. In style he was certainly not lacking, but it was a style formed from the cultivation of an ideal of beauty as distinctively his own as that of Watteau himself. In Romney, on the other hand, there is a pronounced tendency to lean on classical example, which is reflected with less fortunate results in the historical compositions of some of his contemporaries. By what process this feeling for the antique was incorporated in his practice as a painter is not, perhaps, very clear, but it is very probable that it came to him through the contemporary painters of France, with whose productions he was certainly acquainted. His well-known picture of the *Gower Children*, which perhaps most clearly reveals his sympathy with the antique, was painted in the year

1776, and he had already as long ago as 1764 made his first visit to Paris. Romney did not, however, allow his study of classical design to imperil his popularity as a portrait painter, and it may be doubted whether his fame in this department would stand even as high as it does were it not inseparably linked with that of one of the most beautiful women of her time. In 1782, when he was nearly fifty years of age, he first met Emma Hart who, after many romantic vicissitudes, became the wife of Sir William Hamilton and a little later the devoted object of Lord Nelson's undying attachment. Of her rare beauty Romney's numerous portraits afford sufficient evidence, and she possessed besides certain histrionic gifts that make it no matter for wonder that for upwards of a decade she should have attracted and retained the uninterrupted homage of the painter's brush. Goethe, in his account of his Italian travels, has borne witness to her remarkable powers in impersonation of the heroines of classical story and, in the felicity with which Romney translated these varying images of emotion on to his canvas, we may detect yet another proof of his indebtedness to one of the most popular French painters of the time. Greuze's fondness for pressing individual features into the service of a chosen emotion is partly reflected in many of these portrait studies of Romney. Neither he nor Romney possessed sufficient imagination to create a type of beauty inherently fitted for the presentation of the passions they both sought to interpret, but the dramatic power exhibited by both is sufficient to create a kind of interest that lies beyond the domain of mere portraiture. Such experiments hardly do more than mirror the histrionic triumphs of the *tableau vivant* but, as compared with his French contemporary, Romney had at least this advantage that the model he was fortunate enough to secure possessed a beauty more entrancing than Greuze has ever sought to record.

It would not be possible, and it is scarcely necessary in an essay of this kind, to dwell in detail upon the claims of that secondary group of portrait painters whom the example of Reynolds and Gainsborough called into being. Beechey,



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

LADY HAMILTON AS A BACCHANTE, BY GEORGE ROMNEY

Raeburn, Opie, Hoppner, and Lawrence belong to the next generation. There is not one of them who does not possess individual gifts that deserve study, but in their collective output there is no suggestion of any new departure of signal importance. Raeburn is the most robust of the group, and while Hoppner retains in larger measure the charm that we associate with the genius of Gainsborough, there are signs in his work of a gradual failure of taste which becomes pronounced in the portraiture of Sir Thomas Lawrence who, in mere technical accomplishment, was scarcely the inferior of his elder contemporaries.

No survey, however brief, of English painting during the eighteenth century would be adequate or complete without taking into account those larger ambitions in historical composition that found passionate adherents even at a time when the claims of portraiture were paramount. There are two names that must be for ever associated with these luckless experiments in the region of ideal design — the names of James Barry and William Blake. In a sense both may be said to have failed but, whereas Barry's failure was due to a misapprehension of the ideal he sought to revive, the failure of Blake is to be ascribed to causes belonging partly to the artist himself but even in greater measure to the taste of the time in which he lived. Sir Martin Archer Shee, who was destined afterwards to be the President of the Royal Academy in succession to Sir Thomas Lawrence, has left us a vivid portrait sketch of Barry as he appeared in the year 1788. Shee, who was then little more than a youth, had brought over from Dublin a letter of introduction to the indomitable champion of classical art who, five years before, had completed the decoration of the rooms of the Society of Arts. "Conceive," he says, "a little, ordinary man not in the most graceful deshabille — a dirty shirt without any cravat, his neck open and a tolerable length of beard, his stockings, not of the purest white in the world, hanging about his heels, sitting at a small table in the midst of this artificial confusion, etching a plate from one of his own designs." The poverty of Barry's apartment seems to have come as

something in the nature of a shock to the elegant aspirant from Ireland, whose manners even then, as we are told, were regulated by "the highest standard of social propriety which the circles of Dublin afforded." "The floor," he tells us, "seemed never to have experienced the luxury of an application of soap and water. The walls were perfectly concealed by an innumerable quantity of little statues, busts, and old pictures, besides casts of legs, arms, skulls, bones, hands, feet, sketches, prints, drawings, palettes, pencils, colours, canvas, frames, and every other implement calculated for the use of art, disposed in all the confusion and disorder of the most negligent carelessness."

There is something eminently suggestive in the meeting of these two men: the one young and confident, the other not, it is true, old in years but already at the limit of hope and ambition. Twenty years had passed since Barry himself had come like Shee to try his fortunes in London and now, though he had still many years to live, his blighted career was at an end. To recall the words of Reynolds, though with what a different significance, the race was over whether it was won or lost. For as Reynolds well knew his race had been won, Barry must have been as fully conscious that in so far as his loftier ambitions were concerned he had failed. If Barry had only missed the appreciation of his time it would be indeed a pleasant task to review the hardships of his life, to mark the noble aim he kept ever before him, to recall his extraordinary resolution and self-denial, and to welcome as our inheritance the great results he achieved. Unhappily, however, his failure was within as well as without. We may admit that he was not rightly understood by his age, but we must also acknowledge that he did not rightly understand the kind of beauty in art he desired to express.

Very early in his career his youthful essays in design had attracted the notice of Edmund Burke, who then became and for many years remained, his steadfast friend and supporter. There is something wholly delightful in the earlier relations of these two men, and it is almost pathetic to note in later years how Burke's protecting kindness and wise

anxiety for the painter's future grew by degrees more reticent in expression as the fiercer elements of Barry's turbulent character developed. It was owing to Burke's generosity that the young student was enabled to set out for Italy, and the correspondence that ensued between them is almost the only material we possess for a knowledge of Barry's adventures at this period of his career. It is evident that his patron's patience was often sorely tried. Barry's temper throughout his whole career was ungovernable, and we get from his letters some amusing instances of its vehement exercise. At times, also, there are pathetic glimpses of more despondent moods wherein he seems partly to have forecast the ultimate overthrow of his great designs. Passing through Milan he relates how he fell foul of certain ignorant monks who were engaged in completing by clumsy restoration the ruin of Leonardo's great fresco of the Last Supper. Barry's fiery and impetuous temper here at least found fit occasion for its exercise. But, unhappily, it was not always so; for again and again in the correspondence between Burke and himself we have to note how severely the painter's undisciplined disposition tried the faith and the patience of the man who desired to befriend him. At one time Reynolds himself is called in to offer counsel to the young student, and their joint advice to him not to be led away from his own studies by the malice and envy of others was evidently but imperfectly observed by Barry.

And yet the qualities of industry and self-denial he brought to his task were such as must needs command our respect. His life proved that he was ready and willing at all time to make every sacrifice for his art, and in the whole history of painting there is no more notable instance of absolute devotion to a chosen ideal than that which Barry exhibited during the progress of his ill-fated career. It is only when we pass from the character of the man to that of the work he produced that we are able to realise the extent of his failure. His noble ambitions are only faintly reflected in his actual achievement; and whatever praise may now be accorded to his talent would go but a little way towards satisfying the

exaggerated claims that were at one time put forward on his behalf. His indulgent biographer contrasts his genius with that of Raphael, not altogether to Raphael's advantage; and Barry himself, I think, believed he had established a style combining the highest qualities of the antique with the added excellence belonging to the greatest masters of the Italian Renaissance.

Looking back with that cruel clearness of vision which comes with lapse of time, we can perceive the absolute insecurity of such pretensions. We are able to recognise that such art as his could not in its nature render a faithful or satisfying expression of the mind of its epoch. But the failure was not Barry's alone. As he was among the first so also he was in some respects the greatest of those who then laboured in vain. The classical sentiment dominating his design and which pervaded all the art of the eighteenth century that strove for the embodiment of imaginative ideas was absolutely fatal to the production of any work of full vitality, for the sufficient reason that the conception of the antique world which then dominated men's minds was in essence a false and paralysing conception. The formula which pedantic criticism and the fashion of the hour had combined to force upon the world was such as by no ingenuity could be made to express the movement, the passion, and the variety of human life. Even a genius so sincere and so refined as Flaxman's was powerless to escape from the thraldom of its rigid convention. Despite his great gifts, his re-construction of the classical ideal bears the impress of reverent learning rather than of individual power. He had not genius sufficient to forge the link which should bind the old with the new; and if we compare his interpretation of the classic spirit with that which had been made by the masters of the Renaissance, we shall have to confess that although it bears externally the marks of a greater fidelity to the past, it lacks the deeper vision needed to include in its survey the spiritual realities of a present world.

And where Flaxman failed it was not likely that Barry should succeed. In looking even at his most ambitious ex-

periments in monumental design we are struck at once by the prevailing lack of individuality in the features and forms of the characters presented, by the constant failure of passionate expression in the faces, and by a corresponding absence of energy in the movements of the limbs. The action is either tame or exaggerated; the figures, even where the scale is colossal, are wanting in grandeur and dignity. And this failure is at first sight the more remarkable seeing that there existed at the time another kind of art wherein the qualities we miss had been triumphantly displayed. It is indeed a remarkable phenomenon that the efforts of men like Barry and Fuseli and Haydon were contemporary with a series of the most brilliant achievements in the region of portraiture; and nothing shows more clearly the insecure basis of the so-called ideal art of the period than its rigid and determined exclusion of those very qualities which made the portraiture of the eighteenth century so profoundly interesting. The power to combine this personal element which finds its spring in the study of individual features with truths of deeper and wider spiritual significance lay at the root of the transcendent triumphs of the great masters of imaginative design produced by the Renaissance. That power was withheld from the painters of the eighteenth century not only in England but in every country of Europe, and the lack of it gave to all experiments in classic design, despite the great gifts of individual painters, the stamp of comparative failure.

There is only one man of genius appearing in this epoch who can be said to have had a true understanding of the basis of ideal invention in painting. The actual achievement of William Blake is in one sense so small, his technical resources in many directions so limited, that it might seem at first sight hazardous to claim for him a pre-eminence denied to his contemporaries. And yet if his essential gifts be rightly measured and apprehended it will be found that he stands alone among artists of the closing years of the eighteenth century, not only in England but in Europe, in his firm grasp of the principles which underlay the victories of

the great Florentines. That profound attachment to the world of imaginative ideas which was the enduring mark of Florentine painting in the splendour of its maturity no less than in the efforts of its youth was possessed by Blake in an extraordinary degree. The power of visualising imaginative conceptions was indeed in his case carried to a point of almost morbid development. It was so far in excess of his other faculties, and at times so entirely overmastered them, as to expose him to the charge of insanity; and if his work as a poet were alone left to us the charge might be held sufficient to render any detailed examination of his work difficult and perhaps profitless. Not even the earliest of his writings are wholly free from obscurity and the latest are often scarcely intelligible; and yet while he was producing those dark poetic riddles called *The Prophetic Books* he was also giving to the world pictorial designs, the essential attribute of which is their clear and precise definition.

The explanation of this seeming paradox is to be found in his case in the overpowering ascendancy of the purely artistic gift. It was not merely that he was able to translate visions of sublimity into the language appropriate to art, but that he scarcely possessed the power of apprehending them in any other way. The conception struck itself into visual symbol at the first sudden and certain vision; and what to other men is the fruit of reflection and sometimes of long experiment came to him almost without seeking. Every thought found at once its sensuous image: his imagination knew no other vehicle of utterance save that which he had chosen for its exercise. His invention touches sublime things with so familiar a grasp and invades the supernatural realm with a step so confident, sometimes so audacious, as to suggest the simple apprehension of a child who will stretch out his hand to seize the stars.

Being himself both a poet and a painter, Blake presents the most valuable illustration that can be conceived both of the sympathy and the distinction of the two arts. To the poet who has to mould the intellectual material of language to the uses of beauty the logical faculty is as indispensable

as the imaginative gift. In Blake's case this logical faculty was from the first feeble, and grew gradually weaker as his brain became thronged with images that overpowered his resources. It was clear that he was often endeavouring to use words as though they were definite images endowed with sensuous form and colour, and to those who have studied *The Prophetic Books* it will seem plain that to him they were so. His verse is a piece of elaborate symbolism to which he alone possessed the key; and for every word that now stands as a puzzle to his readers there doubtless existed in his brain a radiant image fixed in determined line.

Hence we have in Blake the exact converse of the common failure of modern imaginative art. Instead of striving, as so many of our painters have done, to use the material of art as though it could be moulded by the intellectual processes of language, he sought to invade the realm of the poet with the instruments appropriate to painting and to employ words as though they were fixed symbols fair for the eye to see. But however injurious this tendency to the work of the poet it scarcely touched the artist's invention. That overmastering inclination to apprehend and to express intellectual ideas by concrete images is of the very life of all great pictorial design and must remain as an essential ingredient in every form of plastic art that invokes the aid of the imagination.

Blake's services to art are not, therefore, to be measured by the extent or by the perfection of his own individual contribution. There are designs of his which, in virtue of their simplicity and of their direct and powerful grasp of the spiritual truths of his subject, deserve to rank with those of Giotto, as there are also individual examples of rare accomplishment that associate themselves by natural affinity with the genius of Michelangelo; but the unapproachable place he occupies among the artists of the eighteenth century depends upon the distinction both in theory and in practice his genius enabled him to draw between the methods appropriate to the prevalent ideals of his time and those which must be adopted as an indispensable condition of success in

any attempted revival of imaginative painting. Even the wildest of Blake's utterances in this connection will be found to contain the kernel of essential truth. No one has ever more clearly recognised the eternal distinction between the modes of Venetian and Florentine painting or more emphatically announced how vain must always be the endeavour to reconcile their conflicting ideals. In the catalogue to his exhibition which he opened in Broad Street, Goden Square, in 1809, are to be found many shrewd and penetrating fragments of criticism that go to the very root of the matter, and there is a single sentence which sums up in the fewest words those essential divergences of aim and practice that are constantly recurring in the history of painting: "I have now discovered," he writes, "that without nature before the painter's eye he can never produce anything in the walks of natural painting. Historical (by which he means imaginative) art is one thing and portrait is another; happy would be the man who could unite them." And again referring to his own painting in illustration of one of Gray's poems, after warmly eulogising the beauty of its author's imagery, he adds: "Poetry consists in these conceptions, and shall painting be confined to sordid drudgery or facsimile representations of merely mortal and perishing substances and not be, as poetry and music are, elevated into its own proper sphere of invention and visionary conception? No, it shall not be so! Painting as well as poetry and music exults in immortal thoughts."

The effort so valiantly initiated by Blake to establish a tradition of painting in England which should render it worthy to rank with the higher forms of English literature had still long to wait for fulfilment. In his persistent efforts to re-assert the claims of the imagination, Blake was a pioneer whose vision lit up with the clear light of genius the path that must be followed if the goal were ever to be reached, but his technical resources, even had they sufficed for so great an adventure, might well have proved powerless to stem the counter-influence that prevailed in his time. It was not till twenty years after his death, with the advent



F. Hollyer Photo.

From the Engraving.

THE MEETING OF SOUL AND BODY, BY WILLIAM BLAKE

of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, that the function of the imagination in painting received adequate recognition and the means required to give it expression, the nature of which Blake had so clearly perceived, were employed to a successful issue. Holman Hunt, whose great talents were rooted in a devotion to a veracious interpretation of the facts which Nature offers to the painter, has vainly sought to prove that the movement was in essence independent of the poetic impulse supplied by the genius of Dante Gabriel Rossetti; but the real significance of the revolution it effected lies in the re-discovery by Rossetti, and even by Millais in the season of his youth, of the means by which poetic ideas might be truly interpreted in pictorial art.

And it is at this point that it is linked clearly with the earlier experiments of William Blake. In the brief history of modern English art there is indeed no more remarkable figure than his. If he produced no single work that is perfect in itself there is at least nothing from his hand that is not deeply suggestive of the great problems with which imaginative art has to deal. All that he does touches the very essence of poetic invention in painting and awakens a new and profound consideration of the laws that must control the artist in his labour. No Englishman had ever before so powerfully and so persistently asserted the place of the higher imagination in pictorial design, and it may be said, therefore, that no one better appreciated the enduring distinction between the languages of art and literature or more completely understood the means by which the abstract images of the one may be translated into the fixed and certain outlines of the other. These reasons are in themselves sufficient to render the genius of Blake a most fascinating subject of study to the critic and student of English painting.

We must now retrace our steps to the middle of the eighteenth century in order to examine the circumstances in which the great school of English landscape came into being. It has already been noted in speaking of the masters of the Venetian school how at all times in the history of painting

the study of portraiture has gone hand in hand with that of outward Nature. This association was first clearly established in the practice of the Venetians, for it was there that landscape, in the modern acceptation of the term, took its birth; but it is no less characteristic of the masters of Flanders who were directly inspired by the tradition that flowed from Venice, by Velasquez whose commanding personality dominates the art of Spain, and by the great Dutchmen of the seventeenth century who, in virtue of a kindred tendency towards a direct and uncompromising devotion to natural truth found themselves, without the aid of example or tradition, inevitably led to an interpretation of the beauties of the outward world that sets them in close alliance with the earlier tendencies of the Venetian masters.

It must not, however, be overlooked that before Titian had pointed the way that led to the modern conception of landscape painting, the schools of Florence and Umbria had perfected a beautiful landscape art of their own — an art as firmly based on the controlling authority of design as that which they applied to the treatment of the human figure. This landscape of design was, at a later period, taken as a model by Poussin and Claude and survived with varying fortunes in all the schools of Europe to the close of the eighteenth century.

In the beginnings of our English school of landscape we find these divergent ideals reflected in the work of two men of widely different gift and accomplishment. Richard Wilson (1714–1782) was Gainsborough's senior by thirteen years: he was indeed the oldest of that group of contemporary English painters from which the original members of the newly founded Royal Academy were drawn. Like Sir Joshua Reynolds, Wilson began his career as a painter of portraits, whereas Gainsborough in the season of his youth had been almost wholly occupied by the study of outward Nature. And it was only his growing reputation as a portrait painter that forced him partly to abandon the object of his earlier devotion.

Wilson, on the other hand, after his return from Italy in



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

LANDSCAPE WITH BATHERS, BY RICHARD WILSON

National Gallery, London.

1756 definitely renounced the practice of portrait painting and applied himself wholly to the pursuit of landscape. In this sense, therefore, he may be justly recorded as the founder of the English school of landscape painting. His reputation, at the time in which he worked, suffered from the fact that he represented a tradition in landscape art that was gradually yielding before the onset of newer influences. He was the last gifted exponent of a style that may be said to have been founded by Poussin and Claude, but he had the misfortune to appear at a moment when landscape art in England was already turning for fresh inspiration to that earlier initiative of Venice which had travelled northwards through Flanders and Holland. With that more modern form of the art which still continues to dominate the interpretation of the beauties of outward Nature Gainsborough had already allied himself, and it was therefore inevitable that Wilson should have missed in his own day the full meed of appreciation to which his genius entitles him. But no kind of devotion to Nature that has any real vitality is doomed to final extinction, and the taste of our own time has already partly restored Wilson to the place to which his gifts entitle him.

For the aspect of natural scenery he sought to interpret remains eternal in its appeal. It depends, in the last resort, upon an appreciation of those enduring qualities of form that, in the recurring revolutions of taste, are sometimes temporarily obscured but cannot be permanently lost. They re-assert themselves again and again in every department of painting, when men rightly gifted for their appreciation reappear and when the havoc and disorder sometimes engendered by the incursions of what may be called the Romantic spirit produce their inevitable reaction.

Of this Romantic spirit as applied to the representation of the beauties of Nature, Gainsborough was the first English exponent. Something has already been said of the charm of his work in this department, but what is chiefly to be noted here in considering its relation to the gradual evolution of our landscape art is that he was as clearly the originator in

England of the ideals he pursued as Hogarth was the originator of the kind of Genre painting that depends upon dramatic invention. In his feeling for nature he confessed his allegiance, not to the classical impulse which dominated the art of Wilson, but to that more dramatic form of composition that may be traced back to the initiative of Venice. Dramatic it may fitly be called because, when once the painter admits the supreme authority of the atmosphere, there immediately enters into landscape that sense of conflict and movement that lie at the heart of drama. In the work of Wilson and of his predecessors, who acknowledged the classical tradition, these changing phenomena of atmospheric truth are held in subjection. They choose, by preference, the tranquil moods of Nature wherein spaces of calm water mirror a calm sky and the clear outlines of rock and tree and flower are as steadfast and undisturbed as the changeless forms of the distant hills beyond them. For lovers of Nature so inspired, the normal changes of dawn and noon and twilight are all-sufficing. They do not seek to follow the passage of the storm-cloud as it flecks the hill-side with chequered spaces of light and shade: the clouds they love to paint are safely imprisoned in the unchanging blue of midday, or are softly flushed with the radiant tones of sunrise and sunset; and the foliage of the trees as they depict it moved by no restless breeze, lies leaf upon leaf in the delicate tracery of the springtide or in the massed beauty of its summer splendours.

In contrasting the work of these two masters, it may be freely confessed that the immediate future lay with the ideals of Gainsborough. The dramatic treatment of landscape he inaugurated has perhaps not yet run its full course, and although among his successors are men who occasionally display a leaning towards a different conception, it remains generally true that the course he marked out, after allowing for the varying individuality of each separate master, has been that along which the main currents of English landscape have developed themselves. In contrasting his work with that of Wilson it is not intended to suggest that he was



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THE "WATERING PLACE," BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

heedless of those qualities of formal composition that to his contemporary were vital. Judged by the standard of more recent work, Gainsborough may not wholly escape the charge of conventionalism in design, but if we fix our attention upon the essential attributes of his style we shall admit that he was the legitimate precursor of the later and larger explorations in the same field made by the genius of Constable.

It is not possible within the limits of an essay like this to follow in detail all the manifold developments of landscape art in England. At a certain stage in its progress it is inseparably associated with the discovery and practice of water-colour painting. In the varied use of this medium England may claim an unquestioned supremacy, and even the imposing personality of Turner would be shorn of half its glory — certainly in so far as his claims as a colourist are concerned — were it not for the unapproachable beauty of his water-colour drawings.

The career of Crome overlaps that of Gainsborough by exactly twenty years but, unlike Nasmyth, who was his senior by ten years, he reveals only an occasional dependence upon Gainsborough's example. In certain respects, indeed, his individuality is more nearly allied to that of Wilson himself, for although his work reveals no trace of conscious dependence upon the models his predecessor had followed, it is inspired by a sense of form that gives to it in its nobler manifestations something of Classic austerity. His work at successive stages of his career exhibits considerable diversity both of subject and treatment : he could, when he chose, assert complete mastery in the rendering of the most minute detail ; but he is seen at his best in those themes of large and satisfying simplicity that lay around him in his Norfolk home. There have been few painters who could seize with such unerring instinct upon the beauty that dwells in lonely places and in the sweeping outlines of desert scenery. It is sometimes difficult exactly to define the source of that power which makes such an irresistible appeal to the imagination when his pencil is so employed. The few selected lines that determine

the pattern of the design, the broad and massive contours of the foreground that link themselves in perfect harmony with the sky above them might readily, in hands less gifted, prove barren of pictorial interest. It was by a secret peculiarly his own that he was able to confer upon these almost monotonous spaces of down and hillside a subtlety and variety of tone and colour that carries the eye without weariness or fatigue over every part of the composition. With a brush both searching and discriminating he suggests a fullness and intimacy of knowledge that is, nevertheless, always reticently expressed and is never allowed to break from the severe control that gives to the picture its sustained unity of impression. No man ever asked less of Nature in the way of variety or picturesque incident, and yet in the work of no other painter of our school is the authority of Nature so emphatically confessed.

Crome was the son of a Norwich weaver, and throughout the greater part of his career his livelihood depended largely upon his industry as a teacher of drawing. It was only in his very limited leisure that he was free to occupy himself upon the masterpieces he has left behind him. When, at a later period of his life, he established the Norwich school, he was able to gather around him several painters of ability, chief among whom may be reckoned James Stark, George Vincent, and John Sell Cotman. Of this little group the last named was, beyond question, the most gifted. He had something of Crome's power of finding and fixing a single impression in the subjects he selected for treatment, and in his work in water-colour he showed a breadth of execution which entitles him to stand in worthy association with Cozens and Girtin.

John Robert Cozens, whose father was a natural son of Peter the Great, may be regarded as the first man of absolute genius who employed the water-colour vehicle. Constable in after years expressed an unstinted enthusiasm for the poetical qualities of his art, and the splendid examples from his hand to be found in the Print Room of the British Museum go far to justify Constable's saying that the landscape drawings of Cozens "were all poetry." Perhaps

the most beautiful of the series in the National Collection are those which deal with the scenery of Sicily ; and there is



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

National Gallery, London.

WINDMILL ON MOUSEHOLD HEATH, BY JOHN CROME

one in particular with a foreground of rocks that stand out against a space of cool sea, showing Mount Etna in the distance, that is quite incomparable in its effect of simple beauty

revealed in subtly selected tones that are drawn from a palette deliberately restricted. In the Museum also is to be found one of the largest and the best of Girtin's essays in water-colour, a drawing so strong and so beautiful that it helps us to appreciate the sincerity of Turner's remark that "if Tom Girtin had lived I should have starved."

The later development of English water-colour painting cannot here be traced in any detail, though it engaged the services of men so varied in their acquirements as David Cox, De Wint, Copley Fielding, and Frederick Walker who, each in his own way, added greatly to its resources as a means of pictorial expression.

With the arrival of John Constable (1776–1837), that special movement in landscape painting which may be said to have been initiated by Gainsborough reached its goal. He was little more than a child when Gainsborough died, and it is not suggested that his work was in any sense deliberately imitative of that of his great predecessor. Both were Suffolk bred and both delighted in the simple scenery of their county, and yet if their work be now compared there is to be found more of contrast than of similarity. It is none the less true that in some essential qualities of style they are closely allied. As Gainsborough had been the first artist in England to perceive the kind of beauty that may be derived from the study of Nature when it is submitted to the empire of the sky, Constable may be said to have carried to completion this new message which in the work of his distinguished forerunner is only modestly suggested and tentatively expressed. Though not consciously working to that end, Gainsborough in his practice struck the first note of a revolution in England that was destined to supplant the supremacy of the settled forms of Nature as the dominating factor in landscape composition. Constable carried that revolution to its logical conclusion. "There is nothing in Nature," he once said, "either beautiful or ugly but light and shade makes it so." The proposition is eminently disputable, but it indicates with exactitude the ideal he followed, and his own practice offers, beyond question, a superb vindication of

its validity in regard to the particular ideal he had chosen. The landscape of Constable may be said to be the last word



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National Gallery, London.

THE VALLEY FARM, BY JOHN CONSTABLE

of that phase of the art wherein colour, having already assumed complete control over form, yields in its turn to the overpowering ascendancy of tone. The realistic tendencies

of the Venetians had long ago encroached upon the stricter principles of design established by the masters of the South. Carefully balanced masses of colour had gradually superseded the responsive harmonies of delicately arranged combinations of pure line, and Constable, pushing these earlier experiments still further, sought for a kind of beauty wherein the incidents of light and shade reduce almost to complete subjection individual tints of local colour and become in themselves the determining force in the structure of the picture.

The extent of the revolution he effected, not only in England but in France, is sufficiently attested by the reception accorded to his pictures when they were first exhibited in Paris. "They will be the ruin of our school," wrote a French critic of the time, "and no true beauty, style, or tradition is to be discovered in them." If the earlier masters of landscape in France had not, as we have seen, so resolutely turned their backs upon the teaching of Venice, Constable's critics would have realised that the message he bore contained nothing that was startlingly new. The spirit in which he laboured was in essence the same spirit that animates the landscape of Rubens and of the Dutchmen who, in common with Rubens, looked for inspiration to the painters of Northern Italy rather than to the masters of Florence and Rome. Constable himself was sometimes disposed to vaunt his independence of all precept and tradition, but in the things of the spirit it is not possible so to renounce the heritage that time lays at our feet; and it takes nothing from his unimpeachable individuality that the style he perfected should be found to have its roots in the past. And in his less combative moods Constable would have been the first to have admitted this. No man of such convinced purpose was ever more generous in appreciation of his predecessors, whether the spirit of their achievement accorded with his own or professed allegiance to a different ideal. Gainsborough and Cozens were the objects of his enthusiastic admiration, while it was he who declared in a letter to his friend, Archdeacon Fisher, "how paramount is Claude."

In the long roll of English landscape painters, the most

famous name still remains. Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), the son of a barber in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, was born a year earlier than Constable and outlived him by more than a decade; and yet, despite their close association in point of time, it would be scarcely possible to conceive of two men to whose imagination Nature made so divergent an appeal. The time is, perhaps, not yet ripe to fix Turner's exact position in the art history of Europe, and what was needed in the way of advocacy of his claims has been so fully discharged by Ruskin's life-tribute to his hero that criticism for the present may be content to remain silent.

Ruskin's great services to the cause of art may be said to be finally independent of the accuracy of his judgments on individual masters. What he mainly effected in his great, albeit very unequal, work on *Modern Painters* was to lift the consideration of all forms of art to a higher plane: to reassert its importance as a factor in life; and to restore both to the artist and to the student of art an earnestness of purpose that has an ethical no less than a purely aesthetic source. It must be none the less admitted that in the pursuit of this noble mission he was betrayed into a combative tone that led him to commit himself to many false and sometimes inadequate judgments upon the work of individual masters. In seeking to set his chosen hero, Turner, upon a throne, to which he bears a just title, there was no need to have attempted the slaughter of so many giants of the past. Such rhetorical victories, for they are often nothing more, are in their essence inappropriate to the arena into which he introduced them. No man's supremacy in the world of imagination depends upon any asserted superiority over his fellows. Genius dwells uneasily in this falsely created atmosphere of competition, for every admitted excellence in the work of either poet or painter remains for all time exclusively the property of its producer and cannot be challenged by any other worker in the same field.

The flagrant injustice of many of Ruskin's strictures on men like Claude and Wilson and Constable ought not now, however, to be allowed to prejudice the validity of the

claims he so powerfully put forward on behalf of Turner. His general estimate of Turner's commanding position as a painter of landscape is not likely to be disturbed, though it may become clearer in process of time that the praises he lavished upon his hero were not always rightly directed, and the qualities upon which he most insistently dwelt are not, perhaps, essentially those which will give to the painter his lasting title to fame. With that comprehensive grasp that belongs to all genius of the highest order, Turner combined and carried to their full expression confluent tendencies in the evolution of landscape art that, up to his time, had been separate and disconnected. But the transcendent gifts he brought to the task he accomplished are associated with certain qualities of so-called ideal invention that sometimes border upon the scenic and theatrical. For the moment these inferior attributes of his genius are apt to assume undue importance in our final estimate of the painter; and when his reputation has been stripped of the false claims their presence has created, he will emerge even more clearly and more triumphantly as a student of Nature endowed with extraordinary compass and delicacy of vision. If his fame as a painter in oils should suffer any diminution, it will be because as a colourist he never achieved in that medium the same unassailable position that belongs to him as a painter in water-colour. Here and only here, in the eyes at least of some of his admirers, is he to be seen at his best. Nothing, surely, can surpass the tenderness and refinement of his vision or the subtlety of his manipulative skill in the interpretation of the varying moods of Nature which the best of his water-colour drawings display; and in the enjoyment of their beauty we are rarely disturbed by the introduction of those conventions of style which hinder the appeal of some of his more ambitious works in oil.

Of that form of art in which the study of outward Nature is associated with the faithful record of the lives of those whose labours attach them to the soil, English painting in the eighteenth century offers scarce any example. Gainsborough's peasant figures do no more than reflect his own



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE, BY J. M. W. TURNER

National Gallery, London.

happy vision of the rustic scenes in which they appear, and Morland, who might under more fortunate circumstances have become the founder of English idyllic painting and who, in some of his domestic scenes, proved that he possessed the necessary insight and sympathy for such an endeavour, surrendered himself too soon to the sordid temptations his life offered to fulfil the promise of isolated experiments. Even at a much later time in the history of our school we find nothing comparable in power to the idyllic painting of Jean François Millet, although both Mason and Frederick Walker captured a part of that serious spirit with which he invaded the life of the toilers of the fields. In the work of the former, however, grace of form is often too consciously pursued ; and even Walker, who approached his task in a mood of finer veracity, missed the tragic note to which Millet's profounder insight gave him access. This kind of art is constantly exposed to the danger that springs from too ready an acceptance of the beauty that Nature seems to offer. The painter who brings to his task the stored associations derived from his knowledge of earlier artistic triumphs is sometimes too impatient to confer these borrowed elements of grace and beauty which are only convincing when they are genuinely re-discovered in the facts under his observation. Even Millet's strenuous protraiture of the workers in the field could not wholly escape this reproach, and in Walker's most beautiful designs, such as *Ploughing* and *The Harbour of Refuge*, it is scarcely possible to deny, despite the manifold signs of patient observation, that the result owes something to the gathered memories of past masterpieces in sculpture and painting.

Turner died just three years after the little society known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood came into being, and the distinguished writer who had been the lifelong champion of our great master of landscape became in turn the earnest supporter of this new movement. It may, at first sight, seem somewhat difficult to reconcile his ardent advocacy both of the one and the other, for there are certain features of Turner's later practice that unquestionably come within range of the protest against prevalent methods of execution which

was the main purpose of the Pre-Raphaelites' revolt. Of this apparent inconsistency Ruskin was probably entirely unconscious. With an intellect in which the love of beauty was strangely blended with the spirit of scientific observation, it was not the vague impressionism of Turner's final utterances that so much attracted him as the prodigious knowledge of Nature that underlay these shadowy and unsubstantial visions. There was yet another consideration that must have disposed him to look with favour upon the apostles of the new faith. In his researches into the art of the past, mainly undertaken in order to vindicate his high estimate of Turner's genius, he had been led to a quickened appreciation of those more exact methods of representation characteristic of the earlier schools of painting which laboured almost exclusively in the service of religion. It was towards this greater precision in the imitation of the facts of Nature that the young men whose cause he now espoused were constantly striving, and they too brought to their task something of that reverent spirit that was in itself sufficient to win the sympathies of their advocate. For Mr. Ruskin's outlook on art was complex and many sided. His chief disability as a critic lies in the fact that he is apt to approach the consideration of a painting or a piece of sculpture from almost every point of view save that which would instinctively appeal to its creator. Of the processes of the imagination as it moulds and fashions the facts of Nature to forms of beauty, he rarely evinced any profound understanding. At one moment he will sift and sort the physical materials out of which a picture is constructed with the cold inspection proper to the geologist or the student of botany: at the next he will enter a fierce defence of the religious or ethical message it is assumed to convey in a style of heated rhetoric that would not be unbecoming a Scotch divine; and yet, despite the untiring industry and acuteness of his analysis, the essential quality of a painting, that which gives it its sole title to rank as a work of art, he sometimes misses altogether. It is this defect in his critical apparatus that makes him often an insecure

guide in discriminating between the divergent aims and ideals of separate schools and individual masters and betrays him into many false judgments upon the varying modes of expression which these ideals call to their aid.

But the constant spirit of veneration that animates his writings, a spirit as essential to art as it is to religion, and the conviction he conveys that the service art can render to the world is vital to the spiritual well-being of humanity lift the message he has to deliver far above the chatter of the studios and ensures his position as one of the most stimulating forces in modern criticism.

It was this new sense of reverence for Nature, for life, and for art that lay at the root of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Even while Sir Thomas Lawrence was still at the height of his fame there were signs of visible decline in English painting in regard both to seriousness of aim and virility of execution. Its impoverished powers as a mere instrument of imitation had sunk as low as the ideals that inspired it, and for this reason the new movement was able to summon to its standard men of widely different temperament and of distinct and sometimes strangely contrasted gifts. The revolution they sought was destined to affect every form of art however divergent its aims and however large or limited its scope. The common bond that united them lay in a convinced determination to secure for painting a greater veracity in representation, and in this pursuit they were led to take counsel with the Italian and Flemish painters of the Quattro-Cento, whose work, while it prepared the way for the achievements of the greater masters of the sixteenth century, was specially distinguished by its unswerving fidelity in the rendering of the chosen facts of Nature. Once arrived at this neglected source of inspiration, each individual of the group was free to draw from these earlier examples the lessons needed for the accomplishment of his particular task. The realist and the idealist found each upon this common ground a vindication of the principles he professed, and it is perhaps for this reason that as time went on there became manifest among the members of the group such a marked disagreement

as to the essential purpose that had guided them at the outset.

In taking account of this movement it is not necessary to confine our attention to the work of those who were strictly entitled to membership of the Brotherhood. To Maddox Brown and George F. Watts, among the elders, and Burne Jones and William Morris of a later generation, must be assigned their full share in a revolution unquestionably the most important that affected English painting in the nineteenth century. Within the group itself, the two men of greatest natural endowment are John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and in their strongly contrasted aims and methods they serve to show how wide and far-reaching in its influence was that newly awakened spirit striving towards a more intense fidelity in representation, which united them in the season of their youth. Millais, who, in those earlier years, fell under the sway of Rossetti's stronger poetical temperament, developed in his maturity powers in portraiture and in landscape sufficient to secure for him a position of enduring pre-eminence in the history of our school. Rossetti's achievement, though it could never at any time boast the support of Millais' wondrous technical accomplishments, is in one sense more interesting as marking the most powerful attempt that has been made in our time to vindicate the right of poetic imagination to enter the arena of pictorial design. In that pilgrimage to the shrine of the early Florentines upon which he and his comrades set forth, it was the intense imaginative vision of these neglected masters of the past that chiefly attracted him.

To those who have not accustomed themselves to consider carefully the conditions which govern the processes of artistic degeneration and revival, there will appear to be something savouring of caprice in the enthusiasm with which these young Pre-Raphaelites selected as models of style men whose work was confessedly immature. To pass by the crowning triumphs of the great schools of painting and to revert to the tentative practice of earlier workers, who were only struggling towards the goal, may seem like a wilful

inversion of the natural order of things. And in the realm of science it would be so. But in the world of art, as ex-



F. Hollyer Photo.

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA, BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

perience clearly attests, the very greatness of any crowning achievement serves as a hindrance to any direct transmission of the forces it embodies. The stream that has run

its full course has grown to a flood too broad to bridge and too deep to fathom : those who would seek to join its current must, perforce, track it to a point that stands nearer to its source. If this fact be borne in mind, those qualities in the art of Rossetti that strike the superficial observer as savouring of archaic affectation will be found on closer examination to be the outcome of a sure and just instinct of the needs and possibilities of the art of his time in so far as it strove for the re-embodiment of poetical ideas. In carving his way through the laboured rhetoric of later art that seeks to adorn a conception over which the imagination has lost control, it was inevitable that a man gifted like Rossetti should revert to those earlier examples wherein the grasp of spiritual and material truths was at once more passionately intense and more direct and simple in its mode of utterance.

The eager delight with which poetry in the time of Wordsworth reverted to the study of English ballads offers an almost exact analogy to the methods pursued by the Pre-Raphaelites in choosing the painters of the Quattro-Cento for guidance and example. The critics of literature have always been ready to recognise those distinctions of style and method that are appropriate to different kinds of work. We do not expect to find in the verse of Keats the keen and pointed reference to the facts of social life that fitly mark the didactic poetry of Pope. We acknowledge without reserve that each has the right to summon to his aid the kind of realism that best serves his ideal, and if this same acknowledgement is not so readily conceded in regard to painting, it is because its methods and limitations have never in this country been so well understood.

It is in the work of his earlier years that we must look for the surest evidence of Rossetti's genius as a painter. In later life he yielded to influences that were partly destructive of that clearness of vision and assured certainty of interpretation that characterised the efforts of his youth and early manhood. The change that overtook him is in a large measure to be ascribed to impaired health, but it was also due to the growing ascendancy over his imagination of indi-

vidual types of beauty which led him to substitute a kind of idealised portraiture for the earlier faculty of legendary illustration which was then the dominating factor in his design. A part of the comparative failure of his later years must also be ascribed to an inherent limitation of executive resource that betrayed itself more plainly as the scale on which he worked was gradually enlarged. Technically his education as a painter was never wholly completed. At the time at which he entered upon his career there existed in England no school or tradition that could have greatly helped him to the attainment of full mastery over his materials. His special ambitions in painting were strange to the temper of his time and called for a kind of technical excellence for which recent art in this country supplied no models. In his drawing there is often to be noted an extraordinary subtlety and refinement, but these qualities when they appear are the direct outcome of a passionate endeavour to realise the spiritual beauty of his subject and sometimes lack the support they might have gained from a more prolonged preparatory study of the facts of Nature. His claims as a colourist stand in less need of qualification. Such brilliant hues as he was able to combine in faultless association had too long been absent from the palette of our painters, and the harmonies he produced both in his water-colours and in his earlier pictures in oil have always this added magic, that they are charged with a full share of the emotional message of the theme under illustration.

To the period between 1849, when he was just over twenty years of age, and 1868 may be assigned all that is best in Rossetti's output as a painter. In the initial years of this period he had produced *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and the beautiful *Annunciation* now in the National Gallery. In 1858 he painted *The Virgin in the House of St. John*, and to this earlier phase of his art belong a number of his finest water-colour drawings, including *Paolo and Francesca* and *The Heart of the Night*. Between 1858 and 1868 came *The Loving Cup*, *The Beloved*, *Monna Vanna*, *The Blue Bower*, and *Lady Lilith*.



From a Drawing.

W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo. HELEN ARMING PARIS, BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

In the time of his closest association with Rossetti, John Everett Millais produced a series of works that clearly re-



W. A. Mansell & Co. Photo.

From a Drawing.

CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON, BY DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

veal the spell which Rossetti's powerful imagination exercised over the whole of the group. These earlier paintings of Millais, including the *Isabella*, *The Carpenter's Shop*, and the *Ophelia*, are always astounding in their executive skill

and are inspired by a depth of poetic sentiment that was not destined to survive the season of his youth. That precocious talent as a realistic painter which they already display, the subsequent manifestations of his art prove to have been clearly indicative of his essential tendencies. The sense of portraiture which is a prominent feature in much of the work of the Quattro-Cento, even where its aim is purely ideal, in Millais' case ultimately overpowered his earlier feeling for imaginative design; and those to whom these experiments of his youth most powerfully appeal are, perhaps, apt for that reason to do less than justice to the inevitable development that marked the period of his maturity. Millais' claims as a painter are indeed, at every stage of his career, difficult to analyse and to appraise. His survey of Nature is so impartial, the spirit in which he approaches each separate subject implies so complete a surrender to the facts Nature offered to his observation as to beget the suggestion in their author of something approaching to spiritual indifference. It is often difficult to realise that the means he had always at command were set in motion by any definite conception of beauty. And yet his love of Nature was so genuine and so enduring, and his power of recording with the most delicate refinement the subtlest phases of facial expression so complete, that it is impossible to deny to his art a full measure of imaginative inspiration. No man of his time, perhaps few men of any time, could interpret with such magic the finer shades of emotional expression in the faces of beautiful women. When the chosen model rightly stirred him, and without that fitness in the model his invention was often vapid and inert, he could record with faultless felicity the most fleeting moods of tender or passionate feeling.

Mr. Holman Hunt, who was slightly the elder of the remarkable triumvirate formed by himself, Millais, and Rossetti, offers yet further illustration of how diverse were the qualities their common purpose brought into association. Hunt was a realist, but in a wholly different sense from that of Millais, and although his work was animated by a per-



THE CARPENTER'S SHOP, BY SIR JOHN MILLAIS

sistent strain of religious fervour it at no time reached the intensity of expression that flowed from Rossetti's larger poetic gift. In his essays in this direction there remained nearly always a residuum of pure prose which his invention was powerless to penetrate or transform. As an exaggerated preoccupation with the appeal of the merely physical realities of his subject often embarrassed the free exercise of his invention, his spirit tended to concentrate itself upon realities that were not always significant. In this respect the constitution of his mind curiously resembled that of Ruskin himself and it was, therefore, not wonderful that, at the outset of the movement, he should have been constantly singled out by the critic for particular eulogy. Ruskin's references to the painter's *Light of the World* would suggest that he was led away, as perhaps Holman Hunt himself was, by the authority of the subject, to such a degree indeed as to induce an exaggerated estimate of the picture's claims as a work of pure art.

No one who has studied the history of painting is likely to be insensible to the services rendered to art by the deeper emotional qualities engendered by religion. But it is not to be forgotten in this connection that all art produced under the impulse provided by the imagination is in this sense and in its essence religious art. It matters not at all to the painter whose vision carries with it a full measure of reverence for his subject, whether the characters he presents be human or divine or whether the narrative that inspires the painter's brush be sacred or profane in its origin. The story of the life of our Lord, though it bears its own special message to the teachers of the Christian creed, would be valueless both ethically and artistically if it did not provide a deeper revelation of the passions and emotions that are resident in the spirit of man. We have access to no other emotions than those which are generated in our own breasts, and art and poetry, however uplifted its vision, can interpret no other. The bodily form of the Founder of our faith, by whomsoever presented, can be no other than human: it is cast in the selfsame mould as that which belongs to the humblest of



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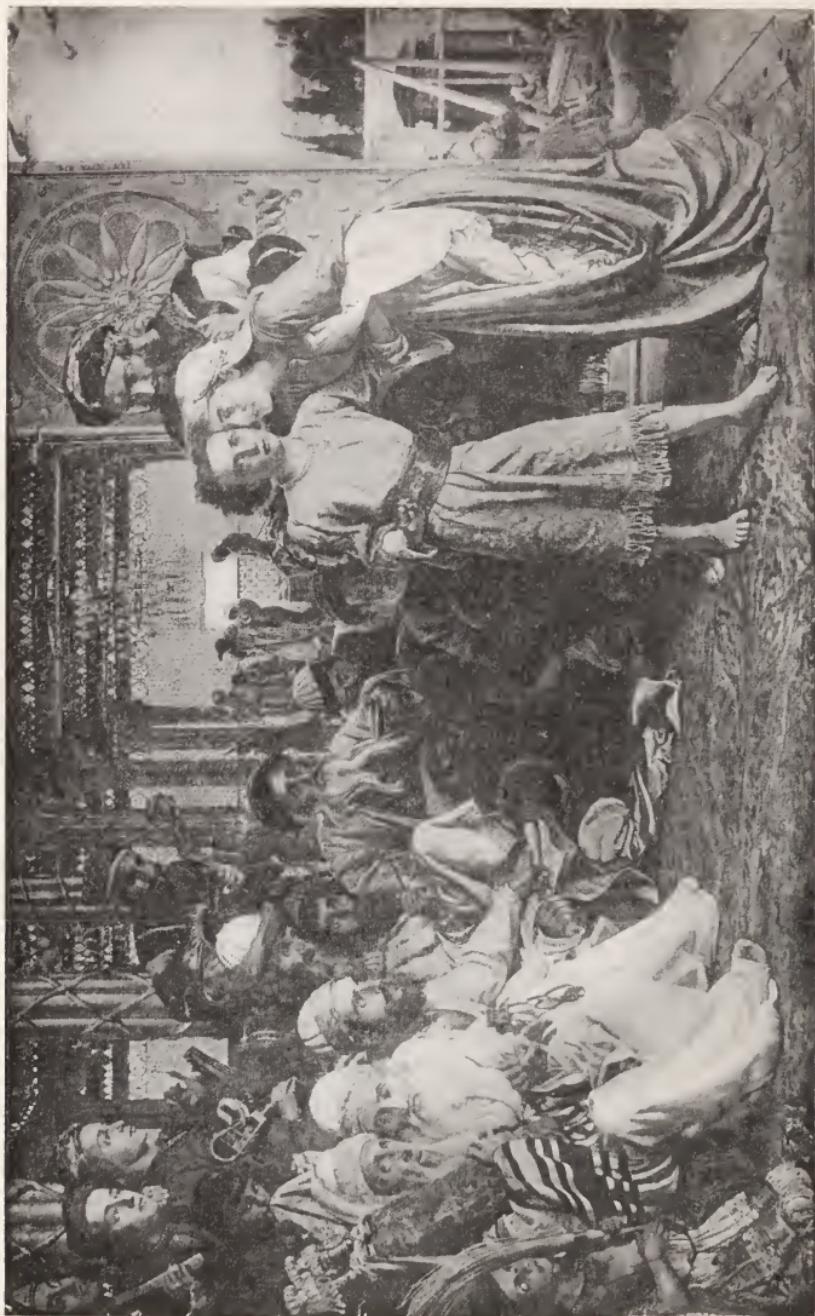
Tate Gallery.

A YEOMAN OF THE GUARD, BY SIR JOHN MILLAIS

mortals: and it bears the same image as that which the sculptors of Greece bestowed upon the gods of the ancient world. If the Christian legend makes a stronger and more intimate appeal than is to be drawn from the storied fortunes of the dwellers upon Olympus, it is because there lies embodied in it the secret of that larger humanity and closer and deeper human sympathy that belongs to the latest of the great religions of the world. It is, therefore, manifestly misleading to set religious painting in a category apart as a thing of superior appeal, needing for its rendering a different and higher order of power in the painter. Without imagination no religious art can be reckoned great, and with imagination no great painting that calls for the support of poetic vision, from whatever source its chosen theme be drawn, can be other than essentially religious.

At the time of their production, however, it was inevitable that such pictures as *The Light of the World* and *The Shadow of Death*, where the symbolism, however reverently intended, is sufficiently crude, should have set their author in popular estimation on a pedestal above that assigned to his contemporaries. Holman Hunt's place in art will not be finally determined by considerations that have so insecure a basis; and his virile and wholly individual qualities as a painter, exhibited with equal power in the illustration of subjects that offer no such fictitious claims, suffice to ensure him his rightful place in the great movement he helped to initiate. Other works of his which, I think, are to be preferred to either of those mentioned are the *Isabella* and *The Finding of Christ in the Temple*, whilst amongst more modest essays that are sometimes wholly satisfying in their purely pictorial qualities such a work as *Morning Prayer* may be specially selected. Among his earlier efforts is his beautiful composition of *The Lady of Shalott*, which appeared in the illustrated edition of Tennyson's poems, and the last picture upon which he was engaged was a life-sized presentment of this same youthful design.

George F. Watts was not directly involved in the Pre-Raphaelite movement, but his high purpose in the region of



From the Painting by W. Holman Hunt. Reproduced by permission of the Art Gallery Committee of the Corporation of Birmingham.

CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE, BY W. HOLMAN HUNT

decorative art set him in natural sympathy with the more gifted of its representatives. His style as a painter had been partly determined by his studies in Italy, undertaken and completed before this group of younger men came into public notice; and if his executive processes remained to the end of his career in some degree tentative and experimental, this must be ascribed to the fact that his painting reveals at every stage of its progress a divided allegiance between the opposing aims and ideals of Venice and Florence. His conception of form, always noble though never, perhaps, bearing the convincing impress of individual study of Nature, led him backwards to the marbles of the Parthenon, but his brush as a painter sought the glowing palette of the Venetians and led him to turn instinctively to the mingled victories of tone and colour that he owed to the example of Titian and his school. In his portraits, which may possibly rank in the final judgment of time as his highest achievement, no other influence is discernible, and it is there, where the claims of Nature are not perplexed or distracted by any other motive, that his great gift finds the freest and most satisfying exercise. But there is another side of his painting, to which he himself would possibly have attached greater importance, that reflects a different ideal. Here he was drawn towards the embodiment of conceptions that can only find utterance through the medium of pure form. Amongst these larger compositions perhaps the best known and the most notable are *Time, Death and Judgment* now in St. Paul's Cathedral, and *Love and Death* and *Hope* in the Tate Gallery. No one can miss the suggestive power and beauty of many of these inventions, but there is latent in them all a manifest consciousness on the part of the artist that the Venetian tradition to which he stood pledged by the associations of his youth does not wholly suffice for the particular task he had set himself. Both technically and spiritually they are marked by a kind of hesitancy that deprives the result of unity and completeness. The drawing is, for the most part, finely expressive, and his great gifts as a colourist never wholly desert him, but the artist would seem at times



Manchester Art Gallery.

Hansraenzl Photo. From the painting by Ford Madox Brown. Reproduced by permission of the Art Gallery Committee of the Corporation of Manchester.

WORK, BY FORD MADOX BROWN

to be haunted by the suspicion that these constituent elements of his picture are not so perfectly fused as to yield a single impression.

Ford Madox Brown, whose methods as a painter are more nearly assimilated to those adopted by the Pre-Raphaelites, offers in his work a curious blending of the contrasted characteristics of the several members of the Brotherhood. He has not the imitative power possessed by Millais, nor can he boast the sustained imagination of Rossetti, whom he sympathetically assisted in the earlier days of Rossetti's studentship. His talent, at certain points, is perhaps more closely allied to that of Holman Hunt, for in the work of both there is evidence of the same struggle between the direct appeal of concrete facts and the authority of the central conception. But his painting, though unequal, is always interesting by reason of its unfailing individuality. His little picture entitled *The Last of England* is unequalled in the restrained pathos that inspires it, and his series of frescoes in the Town Hall at Manchester, though not perhaps to be reckoned his most complete work, exhibit strongly original gifts both in colour and design.

Among the younger men whose imagination was fired by the example of Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones was the most eminent and the most gifted. There have been few men at any period in the history of painting who have grasped with so sure an instinct the means by which art can fitly appropriate those secrets of beauty which at their source make an equal appeal to the poet or even to the musician. Even in the essays of his youth that are confessedly immature it is easy to see that the language of design came to him as his mother tongue. There was never, in his case, any process of laborious translation from one vehicle to another: at the first encounter images that to others appeared only as partly intellectual conceptions were to him things of certain and definite vision. His invention, when it first came into being, expressed itself spontaneously in the dialect of form. Rossetti's often repeated dictum that a picture is a painted poem applies with special force to the work of

Burne-Jones, whose art in this respect, as he himself would have most gladly acknowledged, bears a closer resemblance to that of Botticelli, than to any other master of the Florentine school. Like Botticelli, the legend he set out to illus-

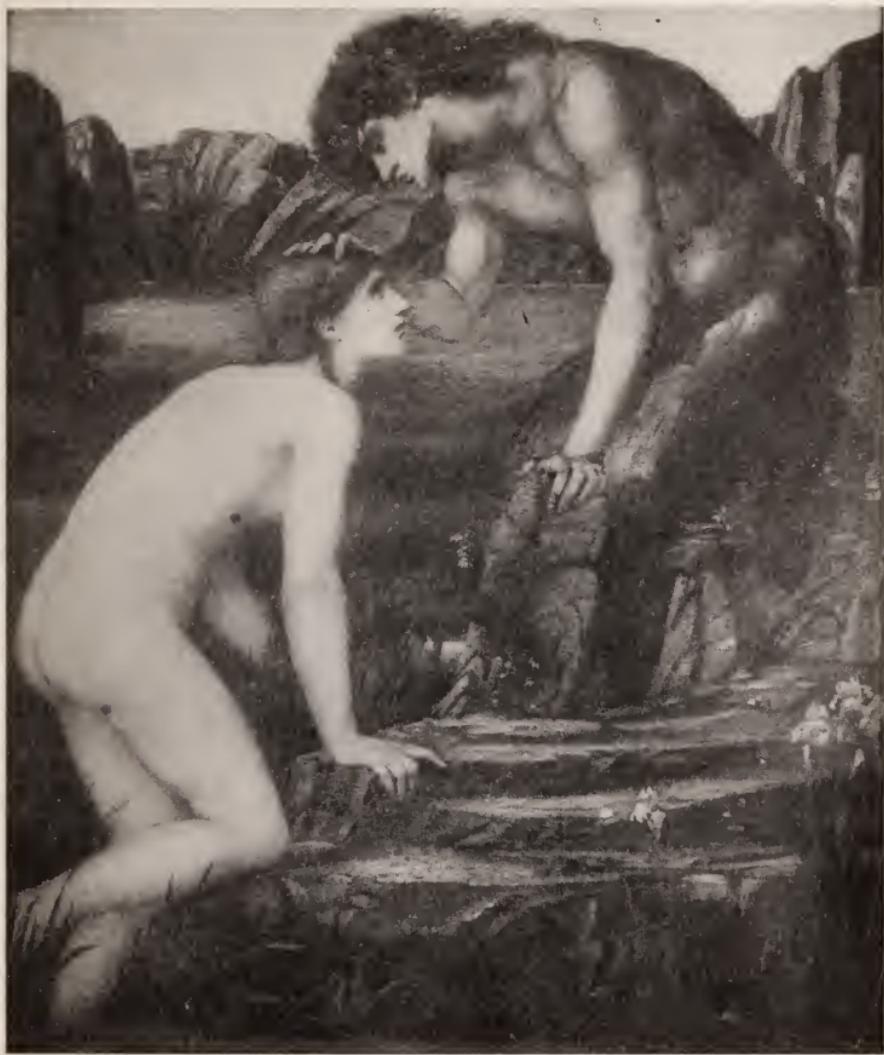


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THE LAST OF ENGLAND, BY FORD MADOX BROWN

trate assumed the most complete authority over the exercise of his faculties as an artist. There was never, in his case, any evidence of that hesitation and uncertainty in the choice of his means that may sometimes be detected in the inventions of Watts. For him, from the outset of his career,

design counted for all. His colouring, even when it is most brilliant, is strictly governed by his undivided allegiance to



F. Hollyer Photo.

PAN AND PSYCHE, BY SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES

the final authority of line. In the interpretation of human character his outlook may be described as lyrical rather than dramatic, and if the types he specially affected are sometimes

open to the reproach of monotony, they were not inaptly chosen for the message he had to convey. Both as regards colour and design he worked at a measured distance from reality, and the confessed limitations which his art exhibits on the imitative side are less the result of imperfect resource than of deliberate restraint. The accidents of light and shade with their infinite varieties of tint and tone which yield its special charm to work differently inspired were not of his seeking. He would, on occasion, so narrow his palette as to give to the result little more than the effect of sculptured relief; he could equally, when so minded, range and order upon his canvas an assemblage of the most brilliant hues that Nature offers. In either case he employed what he had chosen always with a specific purpose for the enrichment of his design rather than for any mere triumph of illusion.

Burne-Jones shared with Rossetti the disadvantages due to imperfect technical training in his youth. Yielding to the spell of Rossetti's imagination he did not, perhaps, sufficiently recognise the limitations of his practice, and he was wont to say in later life that it was Watts who first urged him to a more severe study of draftsmanship. That he ever acquired complete mastery in this direction can scarcely be contended. It was the pattern of the design rather than the searching delineation of individual form that at all times most powerfully attracted him. From the beginning to the end of his career he had always a story to tell, and if he fell short of perfection in individual particulars he never failed to tell his story in language directly drawn from the special resources of the vehicle he employed.

In briefly contrasting the history of this movement, in itself the most interesting and significant in the painting of the nineteenth century, no attempt has been made to take account of contemporary effort that stood outside the range of its influence. Whatever the value of separate achievement in painting that owns a decorative motive or in the branches of portraiture and landscape, they present no revelation of any ideal that had not long been in force. Sir



F. Hollyer Photo.

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE, BY SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES

Frederick Leighton, who at one time had been a pupil of Steinle, retained to the end of his career traces of the influence of the German school that carries us back to the ambitious experiments of Cornelius Overbeck and Kaulbach. As painters of portraits, Frank Hall, Orchardson, and Furse, though they certainly do not equal or surpass work in the same kind produced by Millais and Watts, in their separate ways worthily sustained the tradition of the English school, and Orchardson may be further distinguished by his work in *genre* painting, wherein he successfully liberated himself from the kind of impoverished sentiment that too often invaded the painting of Frith and Faed.

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